AN AMERICAN WOOING

Florence Drummond

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BY

FLORENCE DRUMMOND

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I

THE INVITATION

IT had never occurred either to Moira or to me that we would one day cross the Atlantic to America. We both longed to travel, and we both (Moira especially) found our old home decidedly quiet and monotonous sometimes, but our dreams took us to Italy and to France, to eternal Rome or the sunny Riviera, and often to far-off mysterious India, where we had both been born, and America might have been situated in the farthest star for all the sense of reality its name woke in us. We knew, of course, that one of our uncles had gone there a very long time ago, that he had lived and married and died there, and that letters came from time to time from his widow to our grandmother, but in this country one is apt to grow up in the conviction that relations who have gone to America or Australia join the long-lost tribe, and turn up only in story-books. So it was with the very greatest surprise that we received a sudden invitation from the, to us, almost mythical aunt, who lived in that almost mythical country, America.

Moira was just eighteen then. She is my only sister, though there are so many years between us. We had neither father nor mother, and even I hardly remembered them, for our mother had died when Moira was born, and then we had been sent from India to our grandmother's care. And as our father died long before we were old enough to return to him, the word home always means to us the old, square, grey house in the county of East Lothian—called St Antoine's by some long-dead French ancestor—which stands in bleak country, with only a few trees about it, and from whose highest windows one can catch glimpses of the blue Forth and see at night the intermittent light from the lighthouse on the Isle of May.

I had found it quieter than ever lately. I was very young indeed when I discovered that St Antoine's was never so homelike, its lonely fields never so picturesque, the winding, muddy roads about it and the little woods within reach of it never so interesting as when my cousin, Anthony Menzies, came to stay with us.

He was a very distant cousin, but he shared the family disadvantage of limited wealth, so my guardians were not enthusiastic when I told them I would never dream of marrying anyone else. I cannot say they excited themselves about it. They merely said we were both young and would forget. " Get over it " was, I think, their expression.

But how could I forget Anthony ? If I had ever tried, I would have had to undo so much. Who could ever "get over" the fact that we had been so very young together, made together the same wonderful discoveries, thought together the same "long, long thoughts," woven together so much precious, soon outgrown philosophy, and shared together the same dreams and hopes ?

So Anthony went to India, servant of his Majesty's Civil Service, hoping, like Jamie of the song, to make his crown a pound, and I stayed at home and wrote him many letters, and tried to believe grandmother when she told me that all that was worth having was worth waiting for, and that in patience we were able to possess even more than our souls.

But the time went slowly. The winter days dragged, and Christmas was sad, and spring promised but little gladness, and summer no more, with no visit from Anthony.

It was a day in early spring that grandmother called me to the drawing-room, and I found her with the closely written sheets of a foreign letter in her hand. Spring is not a very cheerful thing with us at its beginnings. Cold winds blow piercingly and the trees have a way of putting out little hard buds and then forgetting there is anything more to be done, and of course I missed Anthony more than ever in such weather.

"Elspeth, how would you like to go to America ?"

grandmother inquired, in the quiet, meditative way she has.

"To America?" I echoed. I took the letter she handed to me, wondering if she were wandering.

"... Don't you want to let me have your two girlies this summer? My thoughts go often over the seas to your bonnie Scotland, and you know I always did have a kind of a fancy for everything and everyone Scotch, and though I'm rich in nieces and nephews here my heart goes out to my Scottish relations more than often, and especially to those two little orphan bairns who had just come from India when I was at St Antoine's. Now if they'll come over to me it will make me a happy woman, and we'll all have a try to give them a good time for the whole summer, and when they are here they need not stay a minute after they get tired or homesick, but I'm quite certain they won't be either——"

It was a long letter, but grandmother interrupted me before I ended it.

"I always liked Mrs John," she said, "Mrs Hunnewell now, but the old name comes to me. She married again and was widowed again, poor thing. She lives now with her brother, who has a wife and family. It would be a great experience for you."

The first thought that occurred to me was, of course, how much more interesting I could make my letters if I went, and how much more quickly the time would go; the second, how glad restless, adventuresome Moira would be to have such an exciting change.

“Oh, grandmother,” I exclaimed, “do you think we could go?”

“It’s not very wise for people who can afford so little in the way of improving the mind by travel to put aside such an offer without consideration. We must see what your Uncle Alexander says.”

I frowned. Uncle Alexander was one of our guardians, and we thought he had very exaggerated ideas of his duty. I was much more anxious to hear what Moira said.

We only had to wait a few minutes to hear both. Uncle Alexander was coming to spend the week-end with us, and Moira had been to the station to meet him. They came in together, with the tea-tray following.

Moira must be of the material of which pioneers and explorers are made. It never even occurred to her to hesitate. She had the greatest difficulty in restraining such demonstrations of delight as would certainly have been condemned as “unseemly” by our elders. Her impatience was almost pain as she watched Uncle Alexander slowly, oh, very slowly, reading the letter.

“Remember how far it is, and all among strangers,” I whispered to her warningly. “Are you sure you would like it?”

“Of course I’ll like it. Oh, don’t spoil it, Elspeth. It’ll be such fun. Just think of all the funny things

Americans say, and how nice American men are supposed to be. Oh, grandmother," she broke out excitedly, "we simply must go."

"Now be canny, be canny," interposed Uncle Alexander. "We'll have to give it thought. A thing done in haste is ill done."

"And come and take your tea," said grandmother, "and don't be jumping about."

Moira pouted and said she had not been jumping, but she came and sat down quietly, and I took my place at the tea-tray with the submission that had been long inculcated in us.

Truly they believe in Scotland that the emotions of the young are to be ignored and never considered, for they discussed with a gravity and discursiveness that appeared to be going to have no end.

Grandmother was in favour of our going. I don't think Uncle Alexander cared one way or another, but he was anxious to keep up his character of careful guardian, and his way of doing so is always to suggest improbable difficulties and point out impossible dangers.

Once or twice I thought he was going to forbid it entirely, just to keep up the supremacy of guardians, and Moira was almost in a frenzy of excitement. To open a door and show her all kinds of adventuresome and thrilling possibilities, such as she had always longed for, and then close it in her face—it was more than even the sternest of Scotch training could teach her to take quietly.

And I—well, I had it in my heart that to cross a wide ocean, as Anthony had done, and go into a new world, as Anthony had gone, would somehow bring me nearer him. And this, with the hope of more quickly passing days and the joy of the letters I could write, made the suspense hardly less trying to me.

We escaped as soon as we could, leaving them still discussing, which they did till the next day.

"One thing I have heard about America is that they respect the sacred rights of individuality there, and don't keep interfering every minute," declared Moira emphatically, directly we were alone. "Oh, I want to go so much, but I don't believe they'll let us. And it would have been such fun."

"I wonder what it would be like?" I said reflectively.

"I don't know. I have only the vaguest ideas. But that is where the fun is, it would be so new." Moira curled herself up in the window-seat in the gallery and I sat beside her with the sewing I was always doing. "There are Gibson girls and elevated railways and stout millionaires with pink faces, and that is all I am certain of, except that cowboys come in somewhere, but I don't think they can be near the elevated railways."

"And Miss Wilkins," I put in, "and all the funny little Puritan people she writes about."

"Is that America?" said Moira doubtfully. "Oh dear, so it is. Well, surely they are not near the elevated railways either."

"I'd like to be near the Miss Wilkins people. I'd rather be near them than the millionaires."

"Oh dear, no, that is dreadfully silly. They are too much like Scotland. I'm going to America for fun."

"Well, don't tell Uncle Alexander so," I said promptly, "or you will put a decided end to all our hopes."

And Moira most certainly did not.

When, the next day, the grave decision was again discussed and argued, and Uncle Alexander made objections, Moira hesitated too. "When you think of it America is a long way. Perhaps a little vulgar too. Not a place people seem to go to much."

"Where did you get these notions?" Uncle Alexander inquired sharply.

I can't say I upheld Moira for what she called her tact, but I know she got her own way oftener than I did.

She got it now.

It seemed gradually to occur to Uncle Alexander that it would be an education, would widen our minds—Moira especially seemed to need it, and that Mrs Hunnewell was very kind indeed to have invited two girls who were likely to be a great responsibility to her. And, after all, it would probably do us good to go. And if our grandmother was of the same opinion, go we should.

I don't know what grandmother's opinion was, except that I do not think it was identical with Uncle Alexander's, but her decision was the same.

And so we were to go.

Grandmother was a little tearful over it. She clasped me in her arms very solemnly, and said she would miss us, but God would take care of us. I had a terrible pang too when the edict was finally given forth, and I wrote to Anthony that evening and told him I could not think why I had ever wanted to go. I am inclined to be half-hearted about things. (Of course I don't call Anthony a thing.) Moira is always entirely whole-hearted, and about this there was no cloud to her joy.

" If you let yourself get sentimental you'd never do anything," she said. Which, if I'd only known a little more at the time, I might have seen was a prophecy as to the way Moira took America.

Once decided and the cable sent (how important we felt when we despatched that cable from the village post office) we found ourselves absorbed in anticipation and preparation. Moira was wildly enthusiastic over everything, from choosing dainty muslin dresses the like of which Scottish climate never permits, to measuring her cabin trunk and writing the answers to the amazing list of searching questions presented to every intending visitor to " the States."

" ' Have I ever been in prison ? ' Would I say so if I had ? ' Am I deformed ? ' Can't they trust their eyesight to tell them that when I get there ? ' Do I intend to remain in the States ? ' Yes, if a nice millionaire asks me, but as he probably won't, I'm not going to give myself away on paper. It seems to me," she added gravely, looking up at me from where she had been filling up both her own paper and mine, "that from the look of these papers people have been in the habit of shipping off all their good-for-nothings and failures to America. Do you suppose that's why Uncle Alexander is sending us? You have been out a good many years and utterly failed to get married."

Far be it from me to boast, but considering circumstances (or rather the circumstance, for Anthony is not plural) I cannot consider myself a failure. I said I didn't care what Uncle Alexander or anyone else thought, and I meant it.

"Mayn't I tell him about that proposal you had at Christmas?"

"If you do he'll think me a fool instead of a failure, and by that paper idiots, no less than failures, seem to have been thought suitable for America."

"Uncle Alexander is a pig," grumbled Moira. "I'm sure he's got the idea of failure. You know people do send their failures to America. Think of Alec Fraser and the Anstruthers' youngest son. They tried all kinds of things, and finally, 'Off to America with him,' and we've heard no more of them since. I think it's very hard on America."

"America's so big," I suggested. "They have more room to hide the failures."

Moira thought for a moment. But America lay in a rosy mist before her happy eyes.

"No, I think America's a nice, kind country that knows the way to treat failures is to pat them on the back and encourage them. There's been too much snubbing done in this country. I think I am rather a failure after all. They are always saying I am silly and frivolous and have no application, and that no sensible man will marry me. Now, perhaps in America I'll be a big success and marry a prince; no, a millionaire."

"Well, do have a thin one."

"Oh, Mr Seymour says it's a mistake about their being fat. They are very thin, and have no digestions. But the millionaire doesn't matter, and I don't care a bit about being a failure if I can go to America. It's such an interesting way of being a failure. Much better disappear in an explosion of interesting good-byes than fade away behind a fatuous smile like the Cheshire cat and the ordinary old maid."

Grandmother came in just then, and the silence that is apt to fall on British youth in the presence of British elders fell upon Moira. She returned with application to her questions and answers, addressed them to Cooks' office, and despatched them.

Moira kept up her spirits even on the last day, and surely the person who can do that is to be marvelled at. I was decidedly in the frame of mind she describes as sentimental, and inclined to wander regretfully round the house and think how lonely the window-seats in the gallery and the path under the hawthorns would be all the long summer, with no one to fill them even with memories and hopes of the Anthony they had come into being to serve. Even the lighthouse, sending its light flashing and vanishing over the sea, seemed to suggest that it would be lonely, missing the moments I watched it at night. I have a disposition to cling to old things. The future is so certain—one need never be in a hurry to rush into it. There it looms ahead—an inevitable heritage. But the dear things of the past and present are the most uncertain in the world. One never knows when they may vanish and fall into the sleep of the past, from which it is so hard to rouse them. We may keep diaries, preserve letters, build monuments, and collect relics, but the past lies fast asleep and cannot be awakened to companion us again. Sometimes in answer to a strain of music or a wafted scent it stirs, and then comes a pang that is pain and regret—as if we felt suddenly that that lost past is indeed part of ourselves and we walked maimed and incomplete without it. They tell us we are made richer by experience as the years go by. It is not less reasonable to say we are made poorer by never-ending loss.

"You are sentimental, Elspeth," said Moira, finding me at the gallery window, gazing out into the chilly grey twilight. "I suppose it comes of being in love."

"I don't know," I answered, "but look out, Moira, do you think anywhere there can be such weird, wonderful, grey twilights and shadowy, ghostly hours that whisper to you and make you remember all kinds of things that never happened?"

"They're so lonely," objected Moira. "I don't like things that never happened. There are too many of them. I want things to happen. And I can't help being glad something is going to happen. It's such an adventure, going to funny America that no one seems to know anything about."

"It's a mercy we are going together," I said; "you for an inspiration and me for a restraint."

Then we went off to console grandmother, who was feeling even more than sentimental.

II

ACROSS THE SEAS

HOWEVER cheerful may be the reason for departure, I defy anyone to feel cheerful either if he is being seen off, or is seeing someone else off, on a long voyage. There is the one going out alone—there is the one going home alone. Either is awful and the combination unutterable.

Moira and I stood and waved and waved, till through our tears we could hardly distinguish which of the handkerchiefs among the many fluttering white specks into which the massed crowd on the quay had suddenly blossomed forth was the one waving to us.

The land moved backwards, slowly at first, then more and more quickly, till at last it rushed away with what seemed a malignant, triumphant haste.

The sight of that widening water struck me like the return of a bad dream. Had I not seen it with the vision of the heart the day I knew the P. & O. steamer was bearing Anthony out of the Thames ?

"As those who, motionless with woe,
Gaze after disappearing sails,"

came suddenly into my head, and I found myself saying it over and over again.

I was not near being "motionless with woe," but I was horribly dejected. At a moment like that all the good-byes that ever have been or ever shall be seem to crystallise and become one, and then poetry is so companionable and sympathetic.

"Oh dear," said Moira, infected by my dejection, "why can we never have things without giving up others ? I want dreadfully to go to America, but I hate to leave home. And I shall want dreadfully to go to heaven, but never want to leave the nice earth."

We decided that we would not watch the land out of sight. Instead, we went down and unpacked the things we needed, and put photographs about our state-room and tried to make it look more like a room and less like a bandbox. I don't think we succeeded. The scarlet cushions and the white paint looked to my eyes decidedly unlovely, and the last I heard from Moira that night was a grumble above my head that she didn't like sleeping on a shelf and the white paint made her forget she was on a voyage and imagine she'd got shut up into a bathing-box by a mistake.

But it was very exhilarating to wake there the next morning with the salt wind blowing in at the little port-hole and the engines beating a monotonous accompaniment to the song of the sea.

We got on deck as soon as possible, hurrying over breakfast, for on the first morning of the voyage there is one absorbing interest, and that is getting to Queenstown.

There are letters to be written and posted there. There are letters and the last of the daily papers to be received, and after, good-bye to British shores.

It is only a little town, deep-set in a creek between emerald hills, lost often in mists. But I am sure it is always well remembered by those who pass it on the Atlantic steamers.

It is there that the freedom of the voyage first charms the heart of the traveller. The narrowing tension of departure and farewell is past. The routine of the days on shore is broken. Life widens in response to the morning winds, the wide salt sea, the circling white-winged seagulls, and the green, distant hills. Then when the slow tender comes alongside the waiting steamer one cannot but feel oneself drawn, for the moment, into sunny and tearful, emotional Ireland.

Hardly have the ropes been thrown before men and women have swarmed up the sides of the steamer, and the deck is gay with white lace and crochet, green handkerchiefs and quaint things of carved bog-oak, and soft Irish voices are calling blessings on "your honour" whether your honour is a purchaser or not.

I soon turned away from them and, leaning on the rail, looked down at the still-crowded tender—the pedlars who had not been lucky enough to be allowed on deck and who were displaying their wares from below, and the emigrants making ready to mount the gangway about to be thrown up to the steamer.

"Look," said a voice at my elbow, "one always sees that sort of thing here."

A fellow-passenger had come up to my side, and following the direction of her glance my eyes fell on a little group, huddled together immediately below us.

There was a boy of about twenty, there was an old woman whose bent form was hidden under a green tartan shawl, a stout, matronly woman in her black Sunday dress, and two young girls. They were there to speed the boy on his way to seek a fortune in the New World beyond the seas. The old woman was his mother, he probably her Benjamin, the girls a sister and a sweetheart. I hoped that one had been a wife, but when he mounted the gangway he came alone. And the matronly woman was no doubt a kindly neighbour, who, misdoubting her of the safety of leaving these grief-stricken people to themselves, had come to support and to command.

They did not try to comfort each other. It may have been a common grief, but to each, at that moment, it was a private and overwhelming one. Each girl kept her eyes on the boy. The mother's face was hidden. When the other emigrants began to move, he picked up his little yellow tin box and his bundle, hesitated awkwardly a moment, then joined the slowly moving throng. A little later he appeared on the lower deck of the steamer, standing above them with his little round box beside him.

The distance was too wide for speech. They could only gaze up pathetically at him—suffering the first of the sudden silence, which, falling, is all the pain of parting, all the bitterness of death. The mother had thrown back her shawl now and risen to watch him to the last. Her eyes were full of tears and her lips trembled, but her face had the pathetic beauty of the aged peasant on whose features only true hardship and true sorrow have set their mark and civilisation had no chance to set the print of its mistakes. And, not stunned by self-consciousness as more trained minds are so apt to be, her sorrow took possession of her with unchecked force. When at last the tender began to move, bearing her back, widening the blue, dancing water between her and her boy, she gave way and wept aloud. The newsmen and vendors were all scrambling and shouting about her; careless, laughing Irishwomen were bundling up their laces at her feet, calling witticisms one to the other; and she stood there in the golden sunshine, heedless of them all, heedless of the sobbing girls beside her, flinging her hands out, then beating them on her breast, bitter tears falling from her old eyes.

It was that old cry—that old, old cry, " Oh, Absalom, my son, my son——"

The real heart-cries are all in the Bible, and they echo unweakened down all the long ages. And, despite man's many and strange inventions, life has a way of running back to these heart-cries. All things seem to come from them and all to fall back upon them.

" Poor thing," said the lady who had first addressed me, and whose thoughts, I think, had not been far from mine. " They'll take good care of her and make her a nice cup of tea directly they get her home."

" Do you think they will ? " I asked, smiling through my tears.

" Quite sure they will. I have studied the consolations of life. I advise you to do the same if you are going to be at all happy."

We turned away then, and I shook away the tears of which I had suddenly become aware.

My eyes sought for Moira.

She was not far off, and deep in conversation with the first officer. Moira is a person who thoroughly understands the consolations of life, of which she is in the habit of saying that sympathy is the chief. What she calls sympathy some people would describe as flirtation, but there is no doubt she found it effective.

The first officer was a tall, blue-eyed man with a yellow moustache. He was pointing out some Mother Carey's chickens, floating on the blue water.

" Tell me about Mother Carey," said Moira. " Who is she, and where does she live, and what does she do ? "

" Nothing but own chickens," he answered. " Except in relation to her property, she is non-existent. So is the gentleman possessing the mighty locker below us."

"I like to believe in things," returned Moira. "I think Mrs Carey and Mr Jones have all kinds of occupations we don't know of, and perhaps they dine together in a submarine cave on Sundays. I can't help believing in things. I believe absorbingly in mermaids when I am on the seashore at night."

"You'll believe in sea-serpents then before the voyage is over. Most people do when they are on board ship."

"Do they ? Do they see them often really ? "

"It may be the effect of the waves," he replied.

"I have seen a sea-serpent," put in the lady to whom I had been talking before. We had come up and joined Moira and her companion. "At least it was a very strange animal. The captain said in all his forty years' experience he had never seen any animal the least like it."

"They all say that," the officer mentioned to Moira. "They all quote the captain, and the captain always keeps quiet about it."

"Is it all the effect of the waves ? " I asked.

"I don't know," he replied. "No one believes in the sea-serpent on shore, even when they say they have seen it, but the belief comes back directly they start on another voyage. The funniest beast I ever saw was off the coast of South Africa. It was a monster, and had huge flapping fins fastened on like ears to a huge square head. I never saw how it was joined to its body, or if it had a body at all. The captain said he didn't like the look of it. But you can ask any sailor or any traveller when he's out in mid-ocean. He'll always own to having seen funny beasts in the sea, and he'll always quote what the captain said in connection with the incident."

Later we did, and they all owned up, except the captain, and he shook his head in a knowing way.

We all got very much more sociable as that day went on. Ireland passed out of sight in the early afternoon, and then we were left with no interest beyond the little world on board the ship. By the time the bugle sounded for dinner we were ready to be quite cordial to our neighbours, and the long rows of people at the long narrow tables had lost the repellent air they had worn at first sight. A crowd of strangers is always unattractive at first. It has no harmony as a crowd, and individuality—mysterious secret of charm—has not yet had time to reveal itself.

But here the crowd soon separated itself into individuals, and each contributed something to the general interest. Those who were able enjoyed themselves in their own way, and those who were not made the best of watching those who were.

The interest we roused was all due to the fact that we were going on our first visit to the States. Everyone was interested on hearing this, and for some mysterious reason most people seemed rather pleased. There was one genial, white-bearded old Bostonian who took a special glee in the passing of the days that brought us nearer our destination. I cannot remember that he ever told us anything about the country we were going to, except that men treated their wives there with very much more consideration than in the old countries, and this every American on board told us sooner or later. "Why," said our genial friend one day, "we wouldn't be hired to treat our wives as you do. I've been staying with a Scotsman who sent his wife errands for him—asked her to fetch his glasses. And I tell you that woman was a star. One can't pick up a wife like that on every curbstone, as our expression goes. I just told him. And I think I made some impression."

Then there were our own countrymen, many of whom had been going backwards and forwards for years. "Is this your first visit to the States?" they would ask, and one and all added, "Ah, it's a wonderful country," when we informed them that it was our very first visit. I used to wait to hear some of its wonders set forth, but no one ever attempted to do it. They merely repeated, after a minute's deep meditation, that we would find it a wonderful country, and then gazed at us with what appeared to be a wistful interest, or even a touch of envy.

Evidently they had hardly themselves recovered from the bewilderment of its wonders, and longed to have the sympathy of our experience.

"There's something funny about America," said

Moira suspiciously. "It frightens me. I wonder how long it will take us to find out what it is."

But we really very seldom looked forward at all. As a voyage brings its own interests, it brings also its own limitations. The monotonous throb of the engines seems to chant a lullaby to all little personal hopes and fears. The ceaseless splashing of the waves calls all rebellious thoughts into a song of noteless music. The salt air in one's face as one lies cosily wrapped up in a deck-chair is pleasure enough. The bells that ring away the slow hours and the bugle calling to meals are events enough. A walk in the wind up and down the deck is excitement enough.

I liked it. Dreaming idly is the one occupation a half-hearted person does whole-heartedly. I liked to know the grey, tossing, restless ocean lay all round me. I liked to hear it. It reminded me I was far away from life and custom and daily duty. In the untamed waves and their continual moan there was a great rest. One could look ahead and think what was the peace of a freed soul.

But the time I liked best was night, for the ocean is never so wonderful as when the sky darkens above it, and a ship never so homelike as when its crimson lights glow out among its shadows. It came so quickly—that shadowless, monotonous darkness of the sea—gathering as if somehow it crept up from the grey waters. Venus shone out beside the tall black mast like a silver globe in the twilight. Then other stars gazed softly out, one by one. In the east the tawny moon rose up, strengthening night by night, riding high above the clouds, and across the blackness that was not yet black enough to conceal its restless motion fell a quivering, gleaming, silver path, like a living road to heaven. And the moaning, sobbing, chanting waves spoke and were never silent.

I suppose everyone hears something different in the sound of the sea, and everyone feels as little Dombey did, that their meaning is just beyond reach. To me the sound seems to say always, and over and over again, "No. Oh no, no. Oh no, no." I hear it whenever I listen to the sea. On the rocks the angry breakers shout it: "No, I tell you, no," and on the sand the tiny ripples sigh it, wearily and reluctantly, "No-o-o, no-o-o." And the waves that were broken by the steamer's prow and those that rose and fell in the ocean's expanse said just the same—a sad, inevitable negation—symbol, it may be, of life's great purpose, for does not that purpose reach us, very often, to the sound of a reiterated "No"? I was born on a Friday, within reach of the murmur of the sea, and therefore I hunger for the waves when I cannot hear them, and I sometimes like to believe that the wishes of this world are mistaken ones, and the real ones quite different.

I could wish I were as whole-hearted as Moira. She is always delighted with the present, yet content to yield it up to the immediate future. I "look before and after, and pine for what is not," and it was with much regret for the winds and the waves and the lazy hours on my deck chair that I began packing my cabin-trunk.

The day before we arrived a fog closed all round us. White, ghostly mists blew up from the sea and hurried over the decks, followed by heavier and whiter brothers, and the siren's voice uplifted itself and howled its far-reaching howl through their wet whiteness, repeating it each minute till the darkness forced us to turn and steam out to sea again and there lie at anchor, with the bells going fore and aft all through the night and the stillness about us keeping us all awake.

There was still a concealing mist, chilling the air, hiding the land, as we steamed slowly towards the harbour next morning. We leaned over the rail, trying to discern the dim and ghostly shapes of outward-bound ships, but when at last the fog began to lift, and our eyes saw clearly a high black rock with the white waves breaking on it, the sight came as a shock, as the sight of the walls of his bedroom to a sick man wakened from a morning dream. Our eyes had wandered for so long uninterruptedly over blank distances that this harsh, crude reminder of land and reality came as an intrusion.

But all too quickly the voyage-dream fell back into unreality, and land and life began to claim us again.

On the left a long, green neck of land appeared, with quaint, stiff little wooden houses scattered along the shore. We steamed on slowly till we were once more in a grey region of wharfs and storehouses and harboured ships.

" How new and fresh and exciting the air feels," cried Moira. " I am sure it was only yesterday Christopher Columbus and the Pilgrim Fathers came here. Oh, I feel so excited. I feel as if it were all meant for me. I like America. I feel as if it were all here waiting for me."

" Now isn't that interesting ? " said an American lady, who was standing by us looking out for the husband who would come on board with the commissioners and doctors. " When I get to your country I always see beheaded kings and queens and crusaders —you know, feel them in the air, directly we get into the Mersey River. And I tell you it depresses me. So many ghosts round, no room for me. I go and have a look at them all the same, but America's the place to live in."

" Perhaps it is. What fun," bubbled Moira. " Do tell me, how far off are cowboys ? "

" I guess you haven't much idea of the size of our country," said our friend, swelling with pride. " Cowboys are out West, more than a thousand miles off. We don't have all our shows in one little island like you do. Why, the whole of Europe——"

Even then we had heard it before. We were destined to hear it many times again.

But we had no time to gather more information. A little steamer came alongside, and first the doctors, then the commissioners (with the welcoming husband) came on board. Very soon we were summoned to the saloon, where stern and forbidding officials sat enthroned, and there we had to solemnly state we were ourselves and no other, and that we had no contraband articles in our boxes and luggage (they were trunks and baggage now), and Moira, peeping over one uniformed shoulder, renewed her acquaintance with the impertinent questions which had caused her so much merriment at home.

Then we were presented with a landing-ticket, duly warned to take care of it, for it was the card of admittance to the "wonderful country," and we realised with a thrill that in a few minutes we would really, really be in America.

III

THE NEW WORLD

THE great steamer slid into the narrow dock with a dexterity that was marvellous. I had time to notice it, just as Moira had time to say sweet and charming good-byes to all her friends and respond cordially to the genial old Bostonian who hoped he would meet her again.

There were comparatively few people on the quay, but most of our fellow-passengers found someone to greet with a waving hat and a burst of laughter, which was responded to heartily. I don't know why they found their respective positions funny, but they did, and I fancied it was the man on board who was supposed to be providing the merriment.

Then we gathered round the gangway, grasping dressing-cases in one hand and the precious landing-ticket in the other.

"What a narrow way to the biggest country in the world," cried Moira, as she set foot on the planks at last.

"You'll find it leads to life all right," put in the American lady who was just in front of her. "Good-bye. Very pleased to have met you."

"Here we are, oh, here we really are, Elspeth," bubbled Moira, fairly pulling me off the gangway and from the narrow landing-stage into the great barren custom-house. "What do we do next ?"

I had not the least idea, but I supposed we ought to do something. We had expected to be met, but did not know who would meet us or how we could be recognised, and as no one came forward it was presumably the right thing for us to take some independent steps for a further entrance into America. Moira seemed supremely content to do nothing but clutch my arm and say, "We're in America—America—America. We're really in America."

But in a few minutes a pale and dejected-looking man, who seemed to have the gift of making his very well-cut clothes hang badly and look shabby, came up and greeted us genially.

"Miss Menzies and Miss Moira Menzies—that's so, isn't it ?" he said very cordially. "Guess I'm not mistaken. Well I'm very, very glad to have the pleasure of welcoming you. I'm Mr Henry Wise. You might think I'm your Uncle Harry, what d'you say, as I'm your aunt's brother ? Anyway she's sent me here to look after you and bring you out to her, so you can order me round all you want to."

We felt friendly towards him at once. It is with

Americans as it is with their country. They always make you feel that there is plenty of room for you in their affections as in their land. It is a very pleasant characteristic, and it struck us with special pleasure at that moment. The barren custom-house was just a little dreary, and all round us our little ship-world was scattering itself and mixing with a wider world and becoming quickly lost to us, so we were glad to feel claimed and welcomed too.

"Customs first thing," Uncle Harry went on. "Let's get hold of a decent-looking man. Hi, you attend to us? Come on."

The official followed us, looking very stern, to the pile of luggage gathered under the huge letter "M."

"Open them up," he said peremptorily to Moira.

"What?" exclaimed Moira.

"Open them up," repeated the man.

"Well, I don't believe there's another country that asks you to open your own boxes," exclaimed Moira.

"You're in America now," replied the man grimly.

"So I am," returned Moira, with unfailing cheerfulness, dropping on to her knees and beginning to tug at a strap. "What fun it is!"

"This is a free country, you see," put in Uncle Harry, "so they can make you do anything they want."

We opened all our trunks, closed them again, and had them marked with chalk (which afterwards proved to be indelible chalk), nodded a last farewell to the steamer friends who still lingered, then got it all given into the hands of someone called an "expressman," and made our way downstairs and outside to the carriage that awaited us.

"A free country," Uncle Harry went on, exactly as if there had been no interruption at all. "It will strike you as queer sometimes. Fact of it is, every man comes along, looks round, and says, 'Hullo, no boss here, guess I'll be boss.'"

It was strange that our first introduction to America should have been with a man who looked down on its ways with aristocratic contempt. His wife was a most patriotic lady, and later I often heard her say, "Why don't you go over and live in England? That's where you belong. You're not awake to the privileges of being American."

Aunt Hattie's house, which she shared with her brother and sister-in-law, was several miles out of Boston, in one of the suburbs. So before starting on the little journey we went to a restaurant and had lunch, and then Uncle Harry asked us if we would rather go out by train or by car.

"Trolley-car takes longer, but there's less walking and more air. Besides, girls seem to have a sort of fancy for them," he said. "I call them pneumonia-cars. Worst things in the world for giving you cold."

"Oh, do let's take a trolley-car. Let's try everything new," pleaded Moira.

"Well, I'm glad you like trying what's new," answered Mr Wise, "for that's about all we've got for you. Always seems to me that what's worth seeing is over there. When I say that to my wife she says what's worth living is over here."

"Oh, that's just it. That's why it all seems so exciting—much more exciting than other countries," said my most excited Moira. "Even our lunch was exciting—all those funny names and new vegetables."

"Well, I'm glad you find something to be interested in. America always seems to me to be pretty plain sailing, but our cooking's quite good. Now for the trolley-car."

We swung ourselves up into seats that all faced forward. Then with a whiz and a rush and a moan from the trolley above the car sped onward, cleaving the air with a speed that made mere transit an event in life. It must be the exhilarating American air that helps their fascination, for no motor car on a Scotch road ever seemed to me "in it" with an American trolley for inducing an exciting sense of triumph over distance.

We soon left Boston behind us, or rather came to the region where it straggles off in tall "apartment" houses amongst waste land and barren places, and then, speeding on over a vividly green grass path in the centre of a wide road, came to a world of little, picturesque wooden houses, set down on grass among the trees. There were no fields, no cottages, no little farmsteads or old buildings shrinking away as a wealthier civilisation crept over the land. These little dainty houses, brightly painted, and each with its piazza and gay-cushioned chairs, were the first habitation of man the land had ever known.

Moira said it reminded her somehow of something she had dreamed of. It was really surprising how rapidly the spirit of the young and arrogant country possessed Moira. "They all built their houses just where they wanted them and how they wanted them," she explained, "with no interference from people who are now dead. That is why it seems like a dream. In our country only our dreams are our very own."

I thought it a friendly way of building to have no garden fence round the little plots of land. It gave the look of a gigantic park in which had been made little clearings, with no extra labour of any kind, and there a little wooden house had been put down. I should not have been the least surprised if I had been told that it had been brought along ready made in a cart. And it all had such a pioneer, experimental look. The roads looked so newly cut, the rocks so newly broken. Now and then a grey squirrel scampered across the grass and up one of the tall trees. Once I saw the brilliant wings of a "scarlet tanager" gleam among the green branches, and once the wonderful colouring of a blue jay. Now and then we passed a little lake, taken into quasi-civilisation like the tangled woods, but still bearing its original character. Round each little house the grass was green and shorn, and some had little flower-beds bright with flowers, but just beyond the limits of each little square lot the ground was untouched. The rough rocks peeped up among the rough grass, the tangled undergrowth grew just as it willed, and the trees sprang unpruned above others which lay just where some wind had thrown them.

As we sped on the houses became fewer and fewer, the wild spaces wider. It was delightful—that untamed land and all the little tame houses. There was less pretence about it. We do live in little tamed spaces, but the wilderness is close to our civilisation, and it seems so much nearer the truth to have the wild land close around us. We live all our lives in houses, step all our lives on paths that have been trodden into submission, and so we forget that there are many things yet to conquer and wide regions yet to explore. In America one is reminded of it at every turn.

" This is the transfer-station, we get out here," said Mr Wise, interrupting my thoughts. And down we got at a little impermanent-looking wooden shanty, standing at one corner where four wide roads met.

By this time the afternoon was waning. The sun was going down and the light growing less—not softer, as with our sundown hours, but just quietly and regularly less.

We took a path that was a short cut from the road to the house, going through a scant, untidy wood, and brushing past all kinds of branches and weeds. Then from the rough land a step brought us on to a green, close-shaven lawn, and thence to the dainty little wooden dolls' house that was our destination.

It was not, by the way, a little house at all, but all these wooden houses are built so that they look little.

" Bless their hearts, here they are at last," we heard a voice say—a cheerful, strong, happy voice. Half-a-dozen people jumped up from the chairs on the piazza, and the next moment we were being welcomed, at the foot of the wide steps, by the whole family.

It was rather difficult at first to distinguish the family, there seemed so many more of them than there ought to have been; but we discovered afterwards that one was the girl from next door, one a young man who was attached as a friend of the family, and one a lady from another distant suburb who had been specially invited to remain and see us.

" Sue was crazy to go in to the wharf and meet you, but I didn't want it," went on the first voice. It was the voice of Mrs Wise, Uncle Harry's wife. " We've been getting all ready for you."

" It was too bad momma wouldn't let me come," said Sue, " but I'm very, very glad to see you now."

They all said that. You have no idea how nice it sounded. Aunt Harriet took us in her arms and said, " Bless you a thousand times. I'm very, very glad to see you." Mrs Wise said it. Sue said it. Little Montagu said it. So did the girl from next door and the lady from the distant suburb. The young man said it too, and, not content with having introduced us formally, Mrs

Wise pulled him forward again and said, “ Come here, Mr Linton, and tell Miss Menzies how glad you are to see her.”

“ I am, Miss Menzies, very glad indeed,” he said winningly. I had been too bewildered to notice him at first, but now when I looked up it was to feel a shock of surprise that anyone so charmingly picturesque could be an ordinary, twentieth-century man. He looked like Glaucus in “ The Last Days of Pompeii,” and one could imagine him dressed in a white toga and garlanded with roses and not looking at all foolish in the garb.

He asked if we were tired, and when we assured him that we were far too happy and excited to be tired he said, “ Now, isn’t that nice ? I am glad.”

And if he wasn’t he certainly conveyed a very strong impression that he was.

“ You’ll be great friends with Mr Linton,” said Mrs Wise enthusiastically. “ He’s a very good person to have for a friend. You’ll see you’re going to have the time of your lives here. We’re all going to love you to death. And isn’t it nice out here ? Isn’t it sweet and pretty, with all the green trees and the grass ? There’s no one to see us, and we do just as we’ve a mind to all the time. We’ve got your rooms fixed up so nicely. It’s so nice you’re going to be here with us before Aunt Hattie takes you to Bar Harbour.”

“ Momma talks so much,” said Sue, laughing.

“ Mrs Wise wants everyone to be happy,” said Mr Linton seriously.

"Yes, that's so," agreed Sue, sobering promptly.

It wasn't the least like a British welcome. In our country the moment of arrival is often rather trying, and it takes the tired guest all the tact he can muster to get into the house gracefully. It seems to be more the guest's work to arrive than the host's to receive him. But here we tumbled right into the home circle, and they seemed to find it so easy to widen it to admit us. I suppose it is because the American, so clearly realising the wide, unknown lands around him, is always on the look-out for what is new, while the Briton, cherishing the plot of his ancestors, is more apt to be looking out for trespassers.

"Come right in and see your new home. We'll just show you everything, then you'll feel like it belonged to you," said Mrs Wise, taking my arm and drawing me away from Aunt Hattie and Sue, both of whom had been clinging to me. "That's what we want you to feel—it's all yours. Isn't it, Hattie ? Isn't it, Sue ? Come right up, and, Sue, you bring Moira."

We stepped up on to a very clean piazza, and through the open door into the hall. Such a dainty, fresh hall, shining with cleanliness and varnish ! The floor was of stained and polished wood. The prettily curving staircase was guiltless of carpet, and its steps shone with the same varnished brilliance. There was a bay window with a low seat piled with cool-looking green linen cushions, a wide fireplace filled with silvery, sifted ashes, some quaint chairs, and a table—here and there an engraving on the walls, here and there a blue china vase or plate. There was a glimpse of dining-room through a curtained archway to the right, a glimpse of another room through another curtained archway to the left. It looked inviting and dainty, and the immaculate order, the freshness, the absence of coats and sticks, of superfluous draperies, ornaments and furniture gave it an ascetic look which seemed to be in keeping with the country. It confirmed the idea that people had had yet no time to collect and deposit things for their descendants to endure.

Sue and Mrs Wise and Aunt Hattie, followed by Mr Linton and the girl from next door, took us all over the house, praising it as they went. When Sue or Mrs Wise forgot something special Mr Linton or the girl from next door pointed it out. It did not seem—it was not—the least vulgar, this praise of their own belongings. It was as if they were saying, " We do so want you to be pleased, and so we must help you to be pleased as much as ever we can."

And we were pleased. Who could help it ? Have you ever seen in your dreams a little house that is built by your fancy, for your fancy, admitting no foreign suggestion, no device that is not for your very own pleasure and delight ? Well, these little wooden American houses come nearest that dream. For the most part they have been built by those who now live in them, planned to suit their needs, their fancies and their caprices. So it comes they are full of quaint little corners and nooks that catch one's attention in a moment. There is nothing the least bit wonderful about them. They are very humble little places compared with the stern, commanding presence of an ancient castle or mansion, or even with the dignity of a town house which is one of a terrace built to enhance the beauty of a city. They don't command at all. They obey the wish and fancy of their masters. They are just what they are meant to be—enclosures for human thought and human happiness.

And somehow it seemed wonderfully easy to obey Mrs Wise's often-repeated desire and "feel just like it belonged to us." You know how an old house at home, or even a house built after an old pattern, seems to enfold you in its own atmosphere and take possession of you. American houses seem to yield to you and ask you to take possession of them.

We saw it all, from the cellar, with its great white furnace and pipes, to the garret that held the family lumber.

And then there was just time to try and get a little tidier—we could not dress, for our luggage had not come—and join them all at dinner.

It was when we were at table I had my first chance to consider the family separately. The girl from next door and the visiting lady had gone. Mr Linton stayed, so there were six of them—Mr Wise, Mrs Wise, Aunt Hattie, Sue, little Montagu and Mr Linton.

Aunt Hattie was tall, and built a little heavily, with masses of grey hair taken straight back from a wide brow, and big, black eyes—not at all what I imagined she would be. I had thought of her as rather subdued, and very gentle. She was the gentlest soul in the world, but not the least subdued. She had a deep, rich contralto voice that promised no lack of life and energy behind it, and a confident, strong, generous manner.

Mrs Wise was quite different, though she too was dark, with big brown eyes. But hers was a face you might expect to see among cloistered nuns, in repose the most *spirituelle*, visionary face imaginable. Her hair fell softly away from her forehead, her great, dark, wonderful eyes shone continually with the light of enthusiasm and intensity, her small, delicate features had that expression of restraint and purity one associates with saints. She was always pale, and she liked to dress in loose, flowing dresses, in which she always looked perfectly graceful.

Sue was neither like her wearied, aristocratic father nor like her enthusiastic, detached mother. She was intensely, conspicuously modern, wearing her own dainty individuality just as if no outside influence reached her, and with that delightful, delicate touch of arrogance that so often characterises the American girl and seems to declare that she knows she is the "heir to all the ages," with the right to choose and reject from the mighty stores the past has spread before her. She was not what can justly be called pretty, but she had a perfect grace of figure, a small, piquante face, with big eyes and a very dignified little head beautifully set on very well formed little shoulders.

It fascinated me to watch her. I looked forward to living with her.

" Moira says even the food is exciting in America. I hope you've provided something specially exciting to-night," said Uncle Harry, as we sat down.

" Well, I bet it will taste good after the food on that old steamer," said Mrs Wise promptly. " It would have been the right thing, you know, to give you Boston baked beans and brown bread. That's the New England Saturday night supper. All over New England that's what people are having. Hot for Saturday night supper —cold for Sunday morning breakfast. We have them Sunday mornings—Harry always wants his beans. Cod-fish cakes too. Oh yes, we're all right Sunday mornings, if we do neglect Saturday nights."

" They must taste everything there is to taste," said Aunt Hattie's glorious voice, " and find out just what they like best."

" It was the vegetables with the strange names that interested me," explained Moira.

" Well, we can do pretty well on vegetables," said Uncle Harry. " Guess you'll find that's one of the things we can do better over here. When I was in England, seemed I never got anything but vegetable marrow, and if there's a thing I despise, it's a vegetable marrow. But up it came every place I was in, and if it didn't taste of the last thing cooked in the pan it tasted of nothing but stewed rainwater."

"We do have vegetable marrow," owned Moira humbly. "I think it must be because they grow in the garden."

"I wouldn't give them ground room," was Uncle Harry's reply. "Another disappointment I had in England was over muffins. I always wanted to taste a muffin, because they were everlastingly having them in Dickens, and they sounded kind of comfortable and friendly and all. So, first thing, I asked for a muffin. Hadn't got any. 'Haven't got any?' I said; 'thought there were muffins all over England.' Not in summer, they said. No muffins in summer. Well, I asked everywhere I went and got the same answer, and I'm blest if I didn't leave British shores without ever having tasted a muffin."

"For people who think they're evolved pretty far, we do seem to like nice things to eat," said Sue.

"Oh, we fix it so we're pleased with our meals and never think of them. That's the way to do with your body—fix it so you never remember you have a body," said Mrs Wise. "It would worry me having bad things to eat, and I shouldn't have peace and calm to progress in. So we have nice things and don't think about them."

The principle of mortification not having been entirely neglected in our education, this rather bewildered me.

“ It seems to me that we never want to lop things off,” said Mr Linton. “ You want to complete them—make a perfect whole and have harmony everywhere.”

“ That’s right,” agreed Mrs Wise. “ We’ve got to have food, so we know it’s part of the perfect whole we should have food, and all we’ve got to do is to bring it to its right place, so that it doesn’t interfere.”

“ Some people think its right place is a very important one,” suggested Moira — “ the most important one.”

“ They are thinking wrong,” said Mr Linton gently, and with a manner that suggested his whole soul was at Moira’s disposal. “ That is what we must ever remember—the ideal in its entirety and perfection must be continually in our minds. Then action, which is but the expression of the mind—the outward form of the inner thought—can never go wrong.”

“ There seems to be something that interferes,” said Moira a little vaguely.

“ That is all an illusion. Evil is an illusion. Difficulty is an illusion. Progress along the line of the least resistance and you will come to the Palace Beautiful. The lions in the way can do nothing but growl.”

“ You just want to know that as long as you are thinking right, nothing can go wrong,” said Mrs Wise. “ And I aim so that nothing happens to prevent me thinking right.”

“ Which after all is much what the hermits and anchorites did,” said Mr Wise.

"They could only avoid. We are learning to conquer," returned Mr Linton.

I should advise no one to go to America who has much reverential clinging to old things. They are there so keenly on the watch for what is new that all which bears the stamp of the past is regarded first with curiosity, and only with reverence if it has a personal bearing.

The conversation never flagged. Whatever the subject, Mr Wise was reminiscent, Mrs Wise and Mr Linton prophetic and enthusiastic, and Sue observant.

Moira seemed able to join in and chatter so much better than I could. I contented myself with watching everyone else and trying not to feel bewildered. There are moments in American meals when you understand how people feel who are afraid of doing the wrong thing at dinner-parties, such as when they hand cheese with apple-pie, or when a dish of green corn is brought to you. How can you guess that you are supposed to take it up and gnaw it ?

But Americans are always willing to instruct you, and seem rather more pleased than surprised that you do not know. It is again the influence of the "wide unknown." They take it for granted that one can't know very much.

One thing that seemed almost marvellous to me was the way they all accepted us, with no preliminaries, no tentativeness. There had been no formal steps to lead us into their society. Here they were—here we had come. There was room for us, and we were to share their life from the first moment.

After dinner we went out on to the piazza. It ran along two sides of the house, and was both spacious and lofty, standing high from the ground, and deeply sheltered by overhanging eaves. Across one corner, suspended from the pillars, was a gay scarlet and green hammock. There were a dozen rocking-chairs of different sizes. Heavy creepers clung to the pillars and about the rails. It had a delightfully cosy appearance, and to be able to peep out at the wildness of the land beyond the little smooth lawn—wilder than ever in the twilight—made our little nook seem quite romantic. Except for the occasional moan of the trolley from the road across the copse, there was an intense quiet about us, although I could have understood even then what Moira means when she says that no quiet in America can disabuse her of the conviction that fireworks may go off at any moment.

But somehow now, by common consent, they all seemed to realise that circumstances and surroundings demanded harmonious response from them, for certainly a different mood fell on them from the moment we came out of the brightly-lit dining-room to this shadowy piazza.

Mrs Wise leaned back in one of the big rocking-chairs, rocking herself gently to and fro, now and then saying sweetly, "Isn't it good to be alive ? I'm so glad you two dear children are here. Seems like I am so happy I can never get enough people to share my happiness."

Sue sat beside me on the steps, her elbow on her knee, her head on her hand, her big eyes fixed steadily on a little bush close at hand, looking for all the world like a sprite hatching a plot for an evening's amusement. (You never knew what Sue would look like from one moment to another.) Aunt Hattie, with Moira close by, her hands in hers, was in a low chair behind us. Little Montagu was curled up in the hammock, apparently asleep.

Mr Wise and Mr Linton followed us very soon. Mr Wise took a rocking-chair and lit a cigar. Mr Linton, after looking about him with a quick glance, began gliding about, making little amendments and alterations. He put a chair in place, gave Aunt Hattie a footstool and Moira a cushion, closed the shutters of the windows behind us from which bewildering patches of light were gleaming, set Montagu's hammock swinging, and finally fetched a tall-stemmed lamp from the hall and placed it on the table, where it shone like a subdued moon in its pale, golden globe.

Then he came and sat down on a lower step at our feet.

" Make things right," he said. " Outside—the darkness, the wilderness. Inside—the lamp of home, of heart. Round about—the borderland of shadow."

He smiled up at us winningly, just a little appealingly, as if he pleaded for his idea.

"What a subtly sympathetic man," I thought. Somehow he made me think of weird, mysterious bypaths. "Lead and I will follow," he seemed to say, even though he always did most of the talking. For he invented nothing. He discovered and confirmed. He made me wonder why our men will so persistently deny.

"It is in moments like these," he said, after one of his long, comprehensive glances on our little circle, "that we realise we are not creators of thought. It comes across to us—from Eternity across the wastes of Time—begging for admittance to the hearts of men. Wedded to those hearts it is the creator of life. When we welcome beautiful thought there will be beautiful life."

"Don't take too much notice of him," said Sue tranquilly. "He says these things because he knows he looks as if he ought to be saying them."

"And you'll have to get used to Sue saying things like that," he responded, looking at her in a way that appeared to me affectionate. "She gets impish sometimes and likes to say them."

"Oh, it's nice to look something and act up to it, only I never quite know what I look like," said Sue. "Look at Moira now. Isn't she like a picture ? She's like the pictures that have gone out of fashion now. Her eyes are so blue, and her hair so wavy, and her complexion's so wonderful. She need never wonder what she ought to be, for it's written in her face. I'm sometimes like a picture too. I'm rather like a Gibson girl, but I believe I like the old-fashioned ones best when I see Moira.

"Isn't it queer and wonderful you've come?" she added a few minutes later. "I like to watch things happening, and wonder what's going to come out of them. And I knew directly I saw you that I was going to like you ever so much."

I felt I ought to say something equally frank and pleasant. But at that moment I couldn't. I felt it impossible to keep up with Sue's calm and charming candour. I could only smile, but she seemed satisfied. Perhaps I look as if I ought only to smile.

The evening was darkening. There were heavy shadows about the house, and blacker gloom lying in the hollows. The stars were brightening above the ragged tree-tops. But even that first night, watching that first darkness creeping up I seemed to miss something that is in our own long gloamings. Something of the loneliness of America reached me even then. Up comes the darkness, but there are no old ghosts to be freed by it. Heavily creeps the night hush—time of life for wandering thoughts—but the wandering thoughts have had so little time to grow strong that if they are there one hardly feels them. Is it the want of that strange, strong, unseen life that makes America sometimes so queerly unconvincing?

. . . .

"Oh, don't you love America? I do," Moira cried to me directly we were alone that night. "You feel so much more yourself, and everything belongs to you so much more."

"I wonder how it would all strike Anthony," was my sober remark. Whereupon Moira promptly told me that I was plunged in old-worldism and conservatism, and that was the last I heard from her as she vanished through the connecting door into her own room.

IV

BOSTON

I WOKE next morning with a delightful sense of exhilaration. The sunshine was pouring in at my window, and the whir of the trolley wires above an approaching car broke on my ears. This then was America. The confused dream of millionaires, tall buildings, strenuous lives and unlimited luxury had vanished in the reality of this dainty house in the woodland, of Sue, Mrs Wise, Aunt Hattie, and Mr Linton.

Breakfast was at half-past seven, for Americans keep very early hours, even on Sundays. But I was so unusually wide awake that I was down even before that hour.

The sun was glinting very brightly on the piazza and its gay cushions and on the lawn and trees beyond. The newly-cut, pioneer look of the white road was very conspicuous, and rather poetical, for the broken rocks and tangled woods were old. The air seemed to have an electric thrill in it. I don't know why, but as I passed out of the immaculately tidy and clean little hall I felt a delightful, exciting sensation of all kinds of possibilities and novelties—not in my surroundings, but in myself.

Sue was sitting on the piazza steps. She wore a pale green linen dress that suited her to perfection, and was conversing with her dog—a valuable mongrel like a small and compact bull-terrier, described as a Boston terrier.

"Good-morning," she said. "I'm real pleased to see you. Hope you rested well. Move, Bram, and let the lady come. I call him Bram, short for Abraham. Isn't he the cutest thing ? I've just been sitting here thinking of you and how to give you a good time."

"It's very nice of you," I said, taking the place vacated by Bram.

"Oh no, it's lots of fun giving people a good time. Much more fun than trying to have a good time oneself. Just as it's much nicer giving presents than having them. Course it's nice to have them, but there's a nicer feeling about giving. You know the Bible says it's blesseder to give than to receive."

"But not because it's a nicer feeling," I suggested.

"Oh yes. It must be higher to do a thing because you appreciate it than because you're kind of afraid something may happen if you don't. I want you ever so much to have a good time. I know Moira will. Mr Linton's going to take care of her. But I can't think just what you like. I know you're very fastidious."

"Oh, I'm not. I'm always interested and happy," I protested. "I think I like just looking on best and watching things."

"Oh, I couldn't bear that. You get all the heartache and none of the fun. But do tell me all about how you feel and think. I love to know how people feel and think. I see your ring, so I may ask if you're engaged. Are you ?"

"Yes. But Aunt Hattie knows, doesn't she ?"

"Oh yes, but if you hadn't worn a ring I would have known you didn't want to talk about it. People don't want to be all fettered down in a hurry."

"Don't you have engagement rings in America ?" I asked.

"Yes, we have them, but not until we're quite, quite sure. We'd think it mean to let a man buy a ring and then give it him back."

"So should we," I hastened to answer. "But we don't give our word unless we are quite sure."

"Well, that's rather silly, because you can't know, can you, till you are engaged if you're going to like it or not. But up here we're a little bit like that too. Southern girls have a beautiful time. They're always engaged, and a Southern friend of mine was once engaged to two men at one time. But they don't wear rings till quite near the wedding."

"I'm afraid I wouldn't be wearing my ring even now, if I followed that rule," I said. "And I've worn it for years."

"Oh dear. Have you known your *fiancé* so long ?"

"Since I was about fourteen. He's a distant cousin."

"There's a great want of progression in marrying a man you've known so long," said Sue severely.

"But one is married for much longer. Isn't there a greater want of progression in that ?" I asked.

But she looked quite serious, leaning her little pointed face in her hand and gazing at some imaginary object close at hand. She often did that, not vacantly, as absent-minded people do, but with apparent interest and intelligence.

"Yes, that's the worst of it," she said. "After you're married there's nothing to look forward to but being dead. It's so apt to be like getting side-tracked, and that's so awful, unless you've got a lot of new moods to bring out."

She spoke quite seriously, though cheerfully. With the American all things appeal first to curiosity, and only secondarily to head or heart. I got used to this way of looking at things later, and no longer felt surprised to find them regarding the disillusions and disappointments of life never as sorrows or burdens but as rather interesting workings of an inevitable lot, to be treated with cheerful philosophy and, if possible, artfully evaded.

"Good-morning, you two," said a cheerful voice behind us, just as I was expecting Sue to continue her subject. " Breakfast's ready, and we are waiting for you. What are you talking about ? "

It was Aunt Hattie, looking very handsome in a white serge skirt and pale pink silk *négligée.* With her was Moira, into whose starry eyes some of the alertness of the morning seemed to have passed.

Sue jumped up. " Oh, we're talking about how we think and feel," she said, " and what's the best thing to do."

" Heavenly Powers," commented Aunt Hattie, just as if she had said " Tut, tut." " You'll have to get used to that, Elspeth. The American is a born preacher. He's possessed with the notion that it matters everything what he thinks and feels, and he's got to tell you. It will strike you as queer, for English people only care what they do. Which is best ? I don't know. It's all in a lifetime. Come in."

" Our way is most interesting," said Sue, as we went in.

" I'm sure it is," Moira agreed heartily.

I looked forward to meeting the family again with delightful curiosity. That is one of the nicest things about America. Curiosity is the only quality required to make life interesting, while at home it needs such close observation, and such long, patient research.

Mrs Wise appeared, looking like a wonderful white angel in a beautiful flowing gown of lawn and lace and ribbon. It is an American custom to wear *négligées* for breakfast. They all greeted us with the same demonstrative enthusiasm they had shown us last night—just as if they could not be too grateful to us for coming. And everyone was just as wide awake and talkative and bright as if it had been dinner instead of breakfast.

"It's the dryness of the atmosphere," Aunt Hattie explained. "Can't help being wide awake in this clear air."

I could not help comparing the breakfast we then sat down to with the same meal at home. Here everybody was ready at once, we all went in together and the courses were served with all the formality of a dinner.

In America one always sits down before an empty plate. I never discovered why, for the servant has just to come and take it away, and then to bring another to replace it. We began breakfast with grape-fruit, daintily cut and sugared and set on a plateful of chopped ice. It was quite nice there, but I am sure I should find it discouraging to come shivering down to iced fruit in Scotland. Then came the "oatmeal," which is not the least like our porridge. Then hot corn bread was handed round, and the renowned "Boston Baked Beans." Everything was served with dainty precision, and everybody conversed serenely and spontaneously. Think of home, where we all appear at a different hour, where the dishes are kept on a hot plate at the side, and where everyone helps himself, not to butter only but to everything else that he wants, and where the man who begins to be brilliant the first thing in the morning is apt to be regarded as something of a bore.

We spent a quiet, idle day, that first Sunday in America. Mrs Wise planned it so, for she said it always took a day to recover from a voyage, and we must " get unpacked and rested." Mrs Wise had attained the art of being very considerate without being the least fussy. Sue said too that it was a good thing to spend a day " getting acquainted," though at the end of it I remember feelin gvery far from acquainted and decidedly bewildered.

On Monday morning Mr Linton appeared immediately after breakfast.

" I thought you'd be starting out early this beautiful morning, and I'd like to come with you," he said.

" Why, of course, isn't that good ? " exclaimed Mrs Wise. " They've got to see Boston, and you know just what to show them. They'll start right away, won't you, Sue ? "

" I guess we'd better. You and Aunt Hattie needn't come, nor you, poppa. I don't like a crowd, and four's a good number."

" Perhaps Mrs Wise will meet us for lunch," suggested Mr Linton.

" Well——" acquiesced Sue, a little reluctantly.

" I feel exactly as if I were in the dream I've always wanted to dream," whispered Moira to me, striking a great uneasiness into my heart. It was so inapropos a remark, and made with such fervour. I looked over at Mr Linton with some suspicion. He was standing in the doorway with the sunlight falling on him, looking just as graceful, picturesque and winning as he had in the twilight on our first evening, only then he had looked like a poet and a dreamer, and this morning he looked like an athlete. I wondered what Anthony would have said about him. Pronounced him incomprehensible, I expect—sent him to swell the ranks of those evasive things which make the stranger return from America with nothing but " It's a wonderful country " to tell the inquiring stay-at-homes.

It was long before nine when we started out, but everything seemed to be astir already. We hurried down the path to the road and came to the wide cross-roads just in time to see four cars meet almost to the moment. We made for the Boston car, and swung up on to it just as if we had been doing it all our lives. We had caught the fine impatience of the States. What is the good of patience in a country where contrivance is always ready to do its work ?

We sped over the same wide road we had come by on Saturday. The woods and little painted houses and the newly cut cliffs looked even more fresh and clean and experimental in the brilliant morning sunshine. There were numbers of school boys and girls on the path, going towards the High School. The boys did not look specially interesting, and resembled the German type more than the English. The girls were charming, every one of them trim and dainty. For the most part they were hatless, and wore their smooth hair tied up with an enormous black bow, and they all wore the very neatest of "shirt waists" and "stocks" and belts. Our schoolgirls never attain either to such tidiness or such self-possession, nor to such individuality. Even at a glance each girl seemed to shine a tiny separate star.

Our first sight of Boston was a panorama of grey roofs lying below us, for the suburbs known as the Newtons rise away from the city. Then we sped down hill faster than ever, till the wind fairly whistled in our ears, came to the tall apartment houses, crossed the green stretch of Commonwealth Avenue, and entered Boston.

Everyone is struck immediately by the characteristics of America. They need not be sought for. They rise up and hit one in the face. One of the first things that impressed and fascinated me was the compelling, pictorial effect of every street corner—of every group of people and of every individual man and woman. It is an effect that differs just as much from the picturesqueness of the old countries as the lines of a clever magazine illustration differ from the soft tones of an old master. The pictures of the Old World seem to have been painted by the slow and patient hands of Life and Love and Death—those of America have been quickly drawn by the impatient hand of man.

And even on that first day I believe some touch reached me of that fantasy which came to haunt me so strongly later, and made me feel that in spite of the fascination of this Western civilisation, in spite of its crowds and its achievements, for some reason or other one is never entirely convinced by it, and gradually one becomes far more responsive to a realisation of immense, silent, unpopulated tracts of patient, waiting land, wind-swept and vast, and one feels that they, and not the hurrying civilisation, are America.

When we got into Boston I began to try to remember all the things I had meant to think of, but I was so distracted by the present sights and sounds around me it was only at the very back of my mind there was any place for the confused jumble of Dickens, Paul Jones, Louise Alcott, Philip Brookes and Mrs Eddy that my faint effort called up.

"You evidently like to sit and think," said Sue presently. "You must be a good thinker if you can think on a trolley-car."

"It is still more difficult to talk, isn't it?" I said.

"Well, yes. Mr Linton can manage it, though, when he has anything he wants to say. But I like trolleys because I can neither think nor speak when I'm riding on one. When I'm blue I just get on the front seat and make believe I'm going to 'ride on forever, forever ride.'"

Could anyone but an American have applied those words to a trolley-car?

Suddenly, without any warning, the car curved away from the street and took a sort of "header" into a tunnel.

It was a most exciting place, and when one thinks of the gloomy solemnity of the Twopenny Tube one is forced to admire the nation that can make even an underground tunnel exhilarating.

Down we went with a clatter and a roar, and a much accelerated speed. Bright demon lights showed the curving rails before us. Brilliant blue-white electric sparks struck and restruck from the wires above our heads. Other cars rushed past us, one after the other, almost touching. Their numbers concentrated here. We seemed to follow and be followed by an endless procession. It suggested quite a pleasing sense of danger.

I don't believe I was a person with a desire for sensations before I went to America, but certainly when I was there I was always experiencing and noting them. It is really impossible to get away from them, and the sensation of the subway is just the prevailing sensation of the country—the latest achievement of civilisation and ingenuity, combined with a primitive sense of danger. There are no doubt dangers everywhere, and one may feel them in London or Edinburgh, or in the village street. But they are not the primitive dangers of experiment which are so exhilarating in America.

We got out at a crowded, brilliantly lit station, where four cars together stopped for a moment on one side of the platform, while on the other the clattering trains from the elevated railway disgorged their passengers from widely opening doors, and then disappeared into darkness again.

We hurried (apparently because everyone else did) up the steps and got above ground again, finding ourselves in a wide paved space between the far-reaching "Boston Common" and one of the principal streets. And all the sight of railway or railway station in view was the stone erection from which we had just emerged, and of which there were seven copies, looking more like mausoleums than anything else.

There are a few scattered sights in Boston. There is the modern State-house with its trophies, there is Fanuiel Hall and Bunker Hill Monument, and there are even one or two churches considered worthy of a visit. They are not romantic. They are not beautiful. They do not, like the old, old sights in the old, old towns of Europe, draw you into themselves, enfold you in a shadowy past, whisper you stories and wake in you dreams, piquing you with curiosity, flattering you with revelations. They have no spell, no witchery. But they are not uninteresting. They speak of the sternness and the repression of Puritan days, and of the sadness and the denial one associates with those days. They are old, but not old enough to have passed into a dream. Their life is gone, but their spirit has not yet entirely vanished. One views them with tenderness, but not with regret. There is something a little withering about the Puritan atmosphere which lingers faintly in Boston, and one thinks with amazement that it is on their soil the ecstasies of Emerson's transcendentalism and the extravagances of Christian Science have sprung up.

With marvellous dexterity Sue and Mr Linton glided past any suggestion of the Revolutionary War, of which there are many memories in Boston. They seemed to think they might hurt our feelings. When I asked Mr Linton some question concerning it he answered, but added that there was no use discussing family quarrels.

“ We must think of humanity, not of country,” he said. And Moira came and whispered to me, wasn’t the spirit of America beautiful after the cocky and narrow way we went on at home.

But they pointed with pride to the grouped flags, behind their sheltering glass, in the central, circular hall of the State-house.

I was charmed by the State-house, with its gilded dome, its statues and paintings, its pure, polished marble and lofty spaces. But I don’t think I could have been thrilled by those flags even if my father had been an American and my grandfather had fought in the Civil War. They looked so terribly premeditated and business-like.

As he invariably did, Mr Linton read my thought.

“ You hang them in your churches,” he said. “ It is more tender, more picturesque. But that was in the days when Church and State and people were very close together. The instinct to serve—to offer—to sacrifice, is very strong still in the Old Country. Here we believe in humanity, in humanity’s work and humanity’s destiny. Church and State must serve man. So we bring his flags—the symbols behind which man laid down his life to serve man—here to the city’s centre, to dignify and glorify the city—representative of home—the place of brotherhood and peace."

It was quite persuasive; but I looked at the huddled, brilliant flags, protected by great panes of glass, and I thought of St Giles, with its shadowy poles and tattered remnants above the solemn aisle, and I knew which I preferred.

But Mr Linton could follow any thought.

"You like the link with eternal hope," he said. "Naturally—we all do. And to you our way seems arrogant. But it is in reality the more humble way. War is the hideous result of man's still lingering foolishness and tyranny, and therefore the relics of war are better out of temples supposed to be dedicated to an All-Merciful Power. They are better in the city, for there they suggest the lives laid down in the attempt to rise above the mistakes of man. How can we make them thank-offerings to a God for that which He never intended should be?"

If anything could have won me over to this point of view it would have been Mr Linton's manner of delivering it. He looked so very earnest and prophetic and picturesque. And with him one breathed an air of deference. The deference of certain American men is a very novel thing for a British woman to meet. It is not deference for the accident of station, for the lady, not even deference for the woman. It is deference for one's individuality and for one's individual destiny. It is the most delightful deference in the world, for it gives one the sense of an impregnable position. It seems to be attained only in America (and not very often even there) and has no sort of relationship to a man being "a man for a' that."

But in spite of it I did not find myself convinced by his persuasions. They sounded all right, but most things can be argued to sound all right, especially in America.

We climbed up to the cupola, and saw Boston, red and black, in light mists of smoke, stretching before and below us, the curve of the River Charles gleaming silver in the centre. ("It's 'the river that in silence windeth,' you remember," Sue said.) And then we all decided that we had done justice enough to the sights for one morning, and we started for the "Touraine," where Mrs Wise was to meet us and lunch with us—the incident which Sue certainly looked upon as the heart of the day's entertainment.

She was quite delighted when she found that we too were disposed to find the Touraine more interesting than the sights.

"After all," she said, "you haven't come to see halls and monuments and churches. You've got them at home, and better ones too. It's American people and places and ways we've got to show you. They are very nice and interesting."

I was quite sure they were. At any rate they seemed to be opening a wide and wonderful field for speculation. And is anything more exhilarating than to come upon a wide new region through which one's mind can scamper speculatively?

But when I glanced at Moira I could not help thinking that she had come for the absorbing purpose of acquiring, imitating and sharing American ways, and that with surprising alacrity.

They were evidently very proud of the Touraine, and certainly it comes nearer concealing the evidences of being an hotel than any other I can remember. There is a hall of Mexican marble, there is a staircase that makes one feel quite regal as one descends it, and a series of palatial little French drawing-rooms that suggest very graceful and well-conducted flirtations. We repaired to the library to wait for Mrs Wise—a delicious room with gold-embossed panels, velvet chairs embroidered in gold, soft, shaded lights, and many books all enriched with a book-plate that is the work of one of America's most noted artists. It is the favourite rendezvous of Boston.

Mr Linton pushed forward the most comfortable chairs, for "We always have to wait for momma," Sue announced.

I was glad we had to wait. There was so much to see. One is more or less accustomed to meet with Americans wherever one may be wandering. They are rather a feature of European travel and there is a season when they may be seen in large numbers in Edinburgh, and most people have opinions and ideas concerning them. But from the first day I was in Boston I knew that to see the American people in all their eloquence one must see them "where they belong." It is there only that one may meet the American without his stare, and in Europe that stare seems to conceal every other quality he possesses.

The Touraine was thronged by exquisitely dressed women and very typical American men. They passed in and out of the elevator, they crossed and recrossed the hall, they formed into little groups about the doors or lingered on the seats in the vestibule. And with them they carried that faint air of artificiality one never gets quite away from with this nation, as if they knew something was expected of them and they meant to fulfil it. It was like a scene in a play.

I believe the quality Americans strive after is "effectiveness." Anyway they attain it. Things are extraordinarily effective in America. Whatever an American woman does—whether she speaks or is silent—she at once seems to fall into a pose that is expressive and eloquent. One's attention is continually arrested, one's curiosity piqued. One feels inclined to say, "How picturesque!" but it is not really picturesque at all, it is dramatic. The American is much more dramatic than picturesque, for his "effectiveness" never suggests a sentiment—rather an idea or an incident. I cannot imagine anyone looking at an American girl and wondering pathetically what life will do with her. What she inspires is an inquiry as to what game she intends to play at with life.

It was something of this attitude Moira seemed to be acquiring. Not that she began to affect Americanism—nothing so clumsy. But in a very American way she appeared to be assuming the pose of the "English girl." I am sure Mr Linton was the inspiration.

Half-an-hour later Mrs Wise appeared. It was the first time I had seen her in anything but loose and flowing robes, and I marvelled to find that she could keep her rapt saintliness of expression and yet dress like a fashionable woman of the world. She looked very lovely. "Quite like the Gibson widow," Sue said, which I discovered was her highest term of praise.

"Well, how d'you like America ?" were Mrs Wise's first words as we took our seats at a little table in the great ornate room, where music wailed "effectively" from an orchestra in a hidden gallery above the door.

Mr Linton answered for us both.

"Miss Menzies finds us very interesting, but rather unconvincing. Miss Moira sees in us a charming playground."

How did he know ?

"You play all you want to, Moira," nodded Mrs Wise, "and you'll see, Elspeth will get round to believe in us before she's through."

"Don't be too sure. If we convert either of them it will be Moira," said Sue.

"Convert ?" I questioned.

"Why, yes," replied Mr Linton, "You can be converted to Americanism just as well as to Mormonism or the Salvation Army. I hope we shall convert Miss Moira. There is a way to convert Miss Menzies, but it would take a long time."

"I guess you're wrong," said Sue; "and I like her best as she is. She's so dear and steady and constant."

"Of course she is, she's just lovely," agreed Mrs Wise with enthusiasm. "I always did love Scotch people. They're so faithful and constant and all."

I felt I ought to say something, but did not quite know what to say. It seemed unnecessary to mention that the quality she admired so much in Scots is not constancy at all but a physical inability to forget. However, a speechless attitude is not so serious in America as it is at home, for someone is always ready to supply the deficiency. Sue supplied it now with a bit of the philosophy Americans always have ready for every occasion.

"I know it's beautiful, and I like to think other people have got it, especially if it's constancy makes Elspeth so dear and lovely," she said, "but I'm glad I'm not made that way. Seems as if you'd get so little out of life, wasting it being constant to things that are gone."

"Sue's a real American," said Mrs Wise, with her delightful laugh. "She just can't put all her eggs in one basket."

Mr Linton ordered the lunch. I learnt afterwards he had a reputation for knowing just what to order in every restaurant in Boston. He gave us a very American lunch. We began with clam broth and we ended with ice-cream. We had one or two vegetables we had never heard of before, and a fish called "planked shad," which appeared on a piece of burnt wood.

But new dishes with strange names had become a very secondary interest to us. We were much more taken up with the people about us, an interest eagerly shared by our American friends. It amazed me to hear Mrs Wise docket every little party with their city as they came in.

"New York," she murmured, when a well-dressed, wide-eyed woman passed, followed by a short, important-looking man. "Washington," she declared of another very graceful woman, who had with her a pale, fair girl and a young son. "Philadelphia, I guess," she said of a family party near at hand.

"How do you do it ?" I asked her. "I see nothing to go by."

"You will, though, when you've been in the States a month," she replied. "Now just look at that girl over there by the window. See the way her feather droops. See the way she holds her hand. Where could she come from if she didn't come from Baltimore ? And see this crowd, right near us. Just see them, just look at them. That's Boston ! Oh my, yes, that's Boston !"

"Momma despises Boston," said Sue, with a merry laugh.

"Oh no, I wouldn't despise them," said Mrs Wise, "but their appearance does make me tired if I see too many of them together. Anywhere you are you can tell their hair and their movements at once. My father used to say when we went travelling abroad he could tell a woman from Boston the moment she came into the room, because she always carried her arms akimbo. Now look at that dainty thing there. New York's the only city on the face of this earth that could have sent her out."

"You can always tell a Southern girl too," said Sue. "She looks at you with big, dreamy eyes that tell you all kinds of beautiful things, and you just love her the instant you see her."

"Oh, it's quite easy," explained Mrs Wise. "Washington's rather gentle and aristocratic. New York's delighted with itself. Philadelphia's very proper. Boston's—well, Boston's Boston, and so on."

I didn't feel much wiser, except for an idea that I would not readily mistake a Bostonian. But the others were all just "American," so far.

"Now there, where do those people come from?" cried Moira suddenly as she caught sight of a little group who had just come in and were taking their places in the centre of the room.

They were rather a conspicuous group, if only by reason of an emerald green hat worn by the girl of the party. There were two burly, astute-faced men, there was a middle-aged lady with a pale pink feather in a black hat, and the girl who wore with her green velvet hat a white dress which had successfully evaded all the safety that usually lies in white. They looked extraordinarily pleased with themselves, but even my inexperience refused them New York. They carried their arms akimbo, but had nothing to do with Boston. The prevailing dramatic element of which they had quite their share caught the attention, but suggested nothing.

"Now which of your cities do they come from?" repeated Moira, inquiring irrespectively of Mr Linton, Mrs Wise and Sue.

They all burst out laughing.

"No doubt of them," said Mr Linton, looking very much amused.

"I guess we can place them all right," bubbled Mrs Wise.

"They pretty well scream where they come from," said Sue.

I wondered what on earth we had come across.

"Now you see what the wild and woolly West sends us," announced Mrs Wise at last.

"The West?" echoed Moira. "Oh, are they cowboys?"

"Yes—or were six months ago," said Mr Linton. "I bet that green hat can ride as well as any of Buffalo Bill's ladies. But they've made their pile and entered civilisation."

"Oh, I'd much rather have seen them as cowboys," said Moira regretfully. "Won't we see any cowboys?"

"Not anywhere here around," said Mr Linton; "but we might find an Indian encampment without going across much country."

"How interesting America is," declared Moira. "We haven't any Indians or cowboys or Chinamen or coloured people at home, and it's quite monotonous."

"Well, I guess you've learnt some interesting facts and some geography during the course of this luncheon-party," said Mrs Wise, as she rose.

I wondered as we went out if anyone there tried to guess our city, and if anyone discovered Scotland in the cut of our skirts.

We did not attempt to see any more of Boston. "Too much like work," Mrs Wise said, "to keep at it all day." So she guided us to the right "mausoleum" through which to descend and find the car that was to whirl us back to the little house in the wood.

It had been a very entertaining day, and we were both ready to declare that Americans were extraordinarily delightful people to go about with.

I wrote and told Anthony that if only he were here and afternoon tea were an American custom I should have nothing to wish for.

Moira wrote a letter too—to grandmother, and I am sorry to say she wasted most of her time and space in explaining the philosophy of the "line of the least resistance." She was aided in this indiscretion by Mrs Wise, who, having resumed her flowing, priestess-like robes, lay on the sofa and offered us various suggestions for bringing " an inspiring American spirit " into our letters.

Meanwhile Sue had disappeared with Mr Linton. I think they were walking in the woods exchanging ideas about Scotland as represented by Moira and me.

V

PATRIOTS

BEFORE we had been a fortnight in America we began to look at it with possessive eyes.

That is one of the wonders of the country—its spirit of invitation to strangers. "I feel as if it belongs to me—I feel as if there were room for me," Moira repeated over and over again. And I am sure if it had not been for my firm anchor to the Old Country I should have felt exactly the same. As it was, I found myself writing to Anthony that America was the best place in the world for hastening laggard days. The people were so delightfully companionable. They seemed to make companionship an art, knowing just what to give and what to withhold, and when to be there and when to withdraw. And they never tried to persuade us to their ways. They told us their views a great deal, certainly, but always with a serene, detached, "take-it-or-leave-it" manner, that suggested they were glad to interest us, but had no desire to convince us. Indeed, the further removed our ways from theirs, the better pleased they appeared to be, and I am sure they would have been disappointed had we failed to contribute some variety. I said so to Mrs Wise once, and she was ready with a reason immediately.

"You see, your life over there is all made. Everyone's got to support what's there, and if he doesn't he just makes trouble and confusion. He can try and improve, but the patterns are all drawn for him. Now here we've got to create—build up everything from the very beginning. And the more variety the better, it gives us more to choose from. Oh, I do think it's all so beautiful," she exclaimed, clasping her hands ecstatically. "I do love America, and I feel I want everyone to love it too. I want to say to everyone who's in the prison of old things and hampered by the people who have gone before, 'Come over here and be free. Come and take the beautiful new gifts God offers you. Don't take those old spoiled things men give you.' That's why we call it God's country—because everything seems like it was straight from God."

Her eyes always glowed and shone when she spoke of her country. Of all the people I have ever known, Mrs Wise stands out as the very happiest. She was president of a society which existed for the propagating of the most exalted and transcendental of Emersonian views, and if anybody carried that society's precepts into everyday life, its charming president did. She had a wonderful faculty for bringing all things into the warm glow in which she lived—just as if her mind were some sort of lamp, which, shining on problem or pain, could instantly illuminate it into joy. She was an inspiration to live with, for she never for a minute dropped from the heights, and nothing had the power to cast a shadow on her.

"See momma conduct a funeral," Sue said merrily once. "We had a cremation here long ago; an old cousin died. Momma positively enjoyed it."

"Well, I did," Mrs Wise responded, laughing. "I had a real delight in burning that poor, worn-out old body. Why not? She'd done with it, and it had hampered her long enough."

Sue, too, was a continual joy, though her attitude towards life was very different from her mother's. To her it was a dramatic affair, to be arranged to satisfy artistic sensibilities. She told me very soon that she was so glad I'd come, as it made things so very much more interesting to have me watching her. I believe the theatrical instinct accounts for much of the American friendliness. They like to be watched. It completes their delight in their own drama of life.

Sue's relation to Mr Linton puzzled me from the first. He seemed very important to her—indeed I should have said that his eyes were quite the most important to all her little plays. Yet she persistently threw him with Moira, and seemed to be absorbed with anxiety that he should appreciate Moira, and that Moira should appreciate him—an anxiety I did not entirely share, especially as Moira confided to me that she expected she'd have to marry an American, "for grandmother will be so horrified about the line of the least resistance she'll never get over it," she explained solemnly.

When we had been with them a short time, Mrs Wise planned to give a luncheon-party.

"It's the right thing to do," she said. "I guess it will bore you out of consciousness and drive me to distraction, but we'll get through it."

"But why have it ?" I inquired, amazed at this concession to duty.

"Oh, it's the right thing to do when you've got guests," she replied. (Formality in America pops out most surprisingly sometimes.) "We always have a luncheon-party for them. Hattie wouldn't think I'd done right by you if I didn't. If there's one thing I hate and abominate, it's a luncheon-party."

But when the day came she was just as enthusiastic over it as she was over everything, and if she really hated it, then she had accomplished the feat of enjoying the emotion of dislike.

Sue was in the wars that day, which rather disturbed the atmosphere. She had received an invitation to an entertainment described as a "Pink Tea," to be given by a young bachelor in Boston. As he had recently proposed to Sue, and as she had no intention of accepting him, Mrs Wise thought it only fitting that his invitation should be declined too. The young man, in her opinion, was rather weak-minded and highly strung, and she was anxious to protect him from further heartache.

But as a great many of her friends (including Mr Linton) were to be present, and as it was to be an " elegant " entertainment, Sue saw in it a unique opportunity for satisfying the craving of her dramatic little heart by playing the chief rôle in an interesting situation, and was by no means ready to forgo it.

I was arranging flowers in the hall while she and her mother discussed their conflicting views upstairs. Americans share everything, even their housekeeping. When a guest arrives it seems part of their hospitality to give her something to do. They have a genius for giving and taking, or, as Mrs Wise put it—" they thoroughly understand the principle of non-separateness." So I arranged the flowers nearly every day.

A good deal of the discussion reached my ears, for closed doors are unknown in America, and only curtains screen the entrances of the public rooms—perhaps the principle of non-separateness again.

" She really ought not to go," I said to Moira, who was idly watching me.

" I don't know," remonstrated Moira. " One must have some interesting things in life to look back on."

" Is that why she wanted to go ? " I asked sceptically.

" She wants to write about it in her diary," said Moira. " Sue does lots of things just to write about them in her diary. And it's so interesting—just like a book. Now mine's as dull as ditchwater."

But when I went up a few minutes later with one of my tall vases of roses Sue had yielded. I knew she must be dreadfully disappointed, but she was enjoying the praise and approval her mother showered on her.

“ Oh, aren’t those roses sweet ? ” exclaimed Mrs Wise, as I entered. “ Sue says she’s not going. Isn’t she dear and good ? I tell her she is just the child her mother would have chosen for her own out of all the children in the world.”

The tears were in Sue’s eyes, and a small, drenched pocket-handkerchief in her lap, but she sat perched up on a high chest of drawers, looking like an elf, and sang loudly and clearly the most extraordinary song I ever heard in my life.

“ I know she’s most broken-hearted to give it up,” explained Mrs Wise, “ but she knows it’s not right, and Sue wouldn’t do a single thing, not on her life, if she knew it wasn’t right.”

> “ Then said Dives unto the Devil,
>   Alleluia, oo resuram.
> Will you give me a brandy and sodium,
>   Alleluia, oo resuram,”

sang Sue, swinging her little feet.

“ Do be quiet, Sue,” said Mrs Wise. “ You know, that boy’s not like every other boy, and I couldn’t see Sue do the destroying angel act, and Sue wouldn’t do it. I never did ask Sue to do a thing because it was right that she didn’t do it in the end.”

"Oo resuram, oo resuram,
  Alleluia oo resuram,"

from Sue.

"She's given it up of her own accord. I never ask my children to do anything unless it's of their own accord. I know they're individual souls just the same as I am, and I've no right to coerce them just because they happen to be born my children."

"Then said the Devil unto Dives,
  Alleluia, oo resuram.
You seem to think that this is an hotelium,
  Alleluia, oo resuram,"

chanted Sue.

"Keep still, Sue, don't sing that horrid song," just glancing towards her for a moment, then, with no pause, continuing: "Never in all her life since Sue was a little bit of a girl have I seen her, with the choice of a lower and a higher way, fail to choose the higher. It only means she must have time. If Sue has time to think, she will only do the very noblest."

"No, but I think it's a jolly hot hellium,
  Alleluia, oo resuram,
Oo resuram, oo resuram,
  Alleluia, oo resuram,"

wound up Sue, who had chanted straight on without stopping.

"Keep still, Sue, can't you?" said her mother, growing impatient, but turning just as enthusiastically to me again. “ If we all did the beautiful, noble things Sue can do, the world would get along a great deal quicker.”

“ Guess I’ll go and wash my hair,” said Sue, bounding off her high perch.

“ Sue, Sue, don’t you do it,” called Mrs Wise after her. “ You’ll never get it dry by luncheon-time, and you know we’re having company.”

Sue took not the slightest notice.

“ Well, I guess she must have her own way about some things,” said Mrs Wise contentedly. “ I’ll find Hattie and turn my soul to this horrid luncheon.”

I did not regard it as horrid at all. I expected to find it extremely interesting, and certainly the preparations for it were most diverting. There seemed so much to do—flowers to be placed all over the house, dishes to be polished and prepared, and candies, almonds, fruits and olives to be distributed in little fancy receptacles, and on each pink plate, that was afterwards to hold a slab of pink ice-cream, a beautiful pink rose, tied with pink ribbon, had to be carefully placed.

We were all employed (except Sue), and Mrs Wise’s leadership and her comments seemed to uplift the work into her own transcendental region.

Meanwhile Sue sat on the piazza, drying in the sunshine her long, luxuriant hair, that hung about her like a veil, absolutely regardless of the passers-by, who, however, seemed equally regardless of her. Through the wire screens of the windows she joined in our conversation, every now and then calling out instructions that would have involved undoing nearly everything we had done. When this happened, Mrs Wise looked helplessly at us, as if begging us to take her part, but Aunt Hattie just said, " Keep quiet, Sue," and went on with the work.

Mrs Wise actually did almost nothing. She was one of those rare (and most lucky) people whose presence is indispensable but whose work is useless.

And she frankly expressed her distaste for the preparations we were making.

" I like high thinking and plain living," she said. " I believe in the man who gave his friends nothing but hasty pudding, yet attracted crowds to go and see him. If my friends want all this to persuade them to come and see me, I'd just as lief they stayed away."

" Why did you invite them, momma ? " called Sue through the window.

" Why, because of Hattie. But one comfort, they aren't as bad as they might be. I've got together the best collection of faddists on my visiting list. Hattie wanted me to ask some real pillars of Boston society, but that's no sort of use, I told her, because Elspeth and Moira have just the same sort at home, and haven't crossed four thousand miles of ocean just to see duplicates."

" Guess I'd be a pillar quick enough if we'd got more money," called Sue.

" And pretty sick you'd get of it," returned her mother. " They make me tired, those little frozen souls.

I tell you when I look at them I believe I see the fetters they are wearing. And they're all so pleased. They just hug their chains and love them. And the Boston people, they just love to be like the English. They are, too. I went to lunch with a dean once, when I was in England—some town where there was a cathedral, I forget what they called it. Oh, it was so old and so beautiful, and there was that great, lovely church—seemed there must be lovely people, with great, beautiful thoughts to match. I thought I'd have a lovely time, just like the old sentimental novels. Oh, my gracious, though, I got sat down at that table, side of the dean, and every blessed person there, dean and all, might be planted down among the Boston people and no one would be able to tell the difference—so proper and polite and pleased about themselves, and you can see what they're thinking all the time."

"Are there people like that in Boston?" I asked, amazed. It seemed impossible that such a type could exist in the same town as a Mrs Wise.

"Why, yes, heaps of them," replied Aunt Hattie. "My husband used to say, 'Let no one enter here except on business' ought to be written on the gates of Boston. That's why they're such faddists. Being American, they must allow themselves some latitude somewhere."

"Are they like that at Bar Harbour?" asked Moira ruefully.

"Bar Harbour! Bar Harbour!" echoed Mrs Wise, her eyes shining as if on unutterable things. “ You wait ! You’ll see what you see at Bar Harbour.”

The table was ready now. It had looked pretty at one time, but we had gradually overcrowded it with a multitude of things that were considered indispensable.

There was no tablecloth. The table had been polished till it shone, and every flowered vase, every candy dish, every plate, cup, glass and salt-cellar stood on its own separate little lace mat. There seemed to be no end to the little plates and dishes, containing olives, salted almonds, and candy of every description.

“ There, it’s horrible ! Come on and dress. Make ourselves as horrible. I’m going to live in a kimono when I get to heaven,” said Mrs Wise.

Here Sue woke up to an active interest.

“ I’m going to choose what Moira’s to wear,” she announced eagerly. “ Moira’s got to be the star to-day, and I’ll just play up to her. She’s got to look as English and innocent as she can. She’s got to be ‘ divine, demure,’ and ‘ a sight to make an old man young,’ and all the rest of it.”

“ Sue, I think that’s perfectly horrid,” indignantly remonstrated Mrs Wise.

“ Is it, momma ? Moira, you’ll have to stop at ‘ divine, demure.’ Mustn’t do anything that’s not nice.”

Up in Moira’s room she cast a very critical eye over all the dresses Moira possessed, and without hesitation decided upon a pale blue Liberty gown, which I had brought back from my last visit to London, and which had never quite won grandmother's approval. It had an embroidered yoke and white crepe sleeves, and it certainly suited Moira very well.

" It's a perfect dream," pronounced Sue, " and Moira's born to wear it. You do your hair so's the little curls hang softly on your forehead, and you'll look just like a picture hanging in an old oak gallery. Then they'll all go home and talk about the lovely Scotch girl we've got stopping with us."

" And what about me ? Am I to wear anything special ? " I asked.

" No," decided Sue, after deliberating a moment. " I don't think you can be a type very well. You must be an individual. You ought to try and be famous some day, Elspeth. You've got the kind of face that looks as if it was going to be famous and have its picture in magazines. I wouldn't say I was engaged, though. It doesn't seem to suit your face, and it's so unromantic having grown into an engagement, like that. I must go and dress too. I'll try and make myself as Gibson as I can, to show off Moira."

She ran off, but five minutes later returned to my room with another extraordinary idea.

" Can you lend me a shoe-lift ? " she asked.

I gave her the shoe-horn that lay on my table.

" I'm going to wear a pair of tight shoes," she said pathetically. " Don't tell them. I've got a heartache, and there's no better distraction for a heartache than tight shoes. That's all. Thank you."

And she was off again.

Luncheon was at two o'clock.

"They'll all come late as a protest," observed Aunt Hattie cynically, just before that hour. "Bostonians hate nothing as they hate coming out to the suburbs. I never did see the sense myself of living three miles away from a lemon."

"Just wait till they're all here," nodded Mrs Wise to me. "Then you'll see why I'm glad to be ten miles away from more than a lemon."

But she did not in the least damp our ardour. They might be frozen, they might be critical, they might be, as the Chicago girl is supposed to have said of them, "too cultured for comfort," but they were Americans, and therefore bound to be interesting to us.

We received them in a beautifully furnished, forsaken-looking apartment known as the reception-room. They pretended not to see us as they passed the unprotected doorway on their way up to leave their cloaks in Mrs Wise's room.

When they came down again and formally appeared, Mrs Wise's greeting was given with a warmth that ought to have thawed the most frozen soul. Then she introduced us, and each one repeated our names after the introduction, and said, "I'm very pleased to meet you."

But we had learnt that this is American etiquette, and no longer took it, as we had proudly done at first, as a special compliment to ourselves.

Americans say we are formal and conventional. They never see that it is only a protecting wall we build to keep outsiders from prying—or else that we are acting a symbol that has its meaning in our hearts. The formality of the Bostonians seems to penetrate their very souls. They keep it there as if it were some sort of grace. No wonder they go in for fads and philosophies and strange new faiths, for the region of ideas is the only one in which they allow themselves any expansion.

It was most amusing to see Mrs Wise in that atmosphere of correctness. It did not in the least trammel her. Her mind seemed to soar in regions far beyond criticism or formality, while she seemed to take an almost mischievous delight in making her guests respond to her personal magnetic charm. As she took her place at the head of the table I wondered if she looked most like an angel or an actress.

I sat at her right hand. Moira, at the other end of the table, was next Aunt Hattie. I could just peep at her through the forest of tall flower-vases.

"How do you like our country?" asked the lady next to me, directly we had taken our seats. "Of course I know everyone is asking you that question, but one is naturally eager to know."

She was a tall, and rather formidable-looking woman, with large, dark eyes, and gold-rimmed eyeglasses, and the thin, pronounced features one associates with New

England—the type of woman who in our country would be learned and very badly dressed, but, being an American, was a faddist and always perfectly dressed. She had been introduced as Mrs Doring Freeman.

"Very much indeed," I answered. It was quite true, so perhaps I said it with conviction. Anyway she appeared to accept it with deep seriousness.

"I am very glad. Now what strikes you as the special feature which impresses you most favourably?"

She looked at me very approvingly, and as American air seems somehow to encourage frankness I told her just what did seem to be impressing me.

"There seems to be room for everyone and everything. One gets the idea that here everyone will have his chance."

She smiled with the superior air of patience a schoolmistress might wear towards a child who had given a wrong answer.

"That is a very foreign notion. No doubt there is labour for those who desire it, but we object, especially here in Boston, to have our country regarded merely as the field for the alien immigrant. Our mission, our work—of which we are proud to think there are already many signs to the observant—is to purify man's mind from superstition and cast off the chains of the barbarism that still fetters the rest of the world, and thus herald the dawn of a rapidly approaching Golden Age."

"How interesting," I said.

" You will find it so. For I learn from certain recent pamphlets and papers that have come into my hands that there is a daily increasing class in England turning from the savage glamour of Imperialism to follow the sacred cause of humanity. You will take back new hope and inspiration to your friends."

I felt guiltily that all I desired was to send home amusing letters to Anthony, but I thought I was justified in saying, " I hope so," with great cheerfulness.

" You may find it difficult at first," she said, with the air of one who would both warn and encourage, " to rid yourself of the prejudices and superstitions, if you will allow me the phrase, of your British upbringing. But if you do so, and turn your thoughts to this new field of endeavour and hope, you will find yourself rewarded."

I thought I would be content with the reward of old endeavour and old hope (if only I could get it), but I said again that the idea was full of interest.

" Ah ! I never think of England without a sigh. So much magnificent material lost, its powers blunted by too much meat-eating and the brutalising effects of sport."

Anthony is an excellent shot, and is the possessor of several silver cups; also his appetite is a gratification to dear grandmother's hospitality.

" Do you never yourself regret the contaminating influence of a standing army ? " continued my instructress.

“We find the influence of a dancing regiment very enlivening to the county,” I said.

But no folly is ever great enough to earn the American’s contempt. To deal with raw material is their speciality. Mrs Doring Freeman smiled at me with genial patience, and said, “I hope you will be able to stay in our country a long, long time.”

“You come from Scotland, don’t you?” eagerly interrupted a small, bright-eyed woman on Mrs Wise’s left. “Mrs Wise has just been telling me about you. I’ve a place in my heart for you if you’re Scotch. My grandmother was Scotch, and her blood in me makes me just love everything Scotch—bagpipes and tartans and heather and cairngorm brooches. I read Crockett and Barrie and all those books—‘kailyard,’ you call them, don’t you? And I keep ‘Wee Macgregor’ by my bedside. It’s so human and sympathetic. I must get you to tell me how to pronounce the words. I long to go to Scotland. How did you make up your mind to leave it and come to the unromantic States? Did you come to forget a love affair?”

She said it just as sympathetically and simply as if she had said, “Did you come for your health?” Evidently it was not a joke. No one seemed the least surprised, Mrs Doring Freeman looking inquiringly interested. I caught Sue’s eye on me. She evidently thought it an opportunity to be acted up to. And I have no doubt that had I owned to a hidden heartache I should have come in for the most charming sympathy, and everyone present would have been alert to give me her instruction and assistance in the useful art of forgetting.

This would have amused Sue, but it did not appeal to my vanity at all. " Oh no, that was not the reason," I replied hastily, and she evidently accepted my word without any reserve at all.

It made me feel quite ashamed of myself, for I knew that had her suggestion been entirely and unhappily true I should have given her exactly the same answer.

" My sister and I were delighted to come," I added, hoping to get away from this embarrassing subject. " I am sure she would tell you the same."

The eager little lady immediately tested it.

" Your sister tells me you were delighted to come to the States, even from your romantic Scotland," she called over the table to Moira. " We think it so interesting. Do tell us how it was."

" They don't give us much of our own way in Scotland," Moira answered, with a most engaging frankness. " I wanted more of my own way, and we heard you believed in individuality in America."

She looked so appealing as she said it that everyone laughed, but they all looked pleased and rather flattered, and Mrs Wise said, " Bless her heart."

" Now, is that not interesting ? " said Mrs Doring Freeman. " Is that the way our beautiful freedom of thought first impresses itself upon the average British mind ? "

"That's more than I can guess," said Mrs Wise cheerfully, "but if it means that blessed child is having a good time, that's all the meaning I want to get out of it."

"You must try and help your young sister to an appreciation of the purity of American ideals and American thought," Mrs Freeman said to me. "You have been given this opportunity, and must use it as a path of escape."

"I don't really want to escape," I said.

"'We needs must love the highest when we see it,'" she quoted.

"But is it the highest?" I floundered, for I wondered what on earth we were talking about.

"Why, now, look here," said Mrs Wise, coming to the rescue with her transcendentalism, "there isn't any highest, or better, or best. The world needs both. It makes me tired hearing people say one country's better and one way's higher. They're all needed, else they wouldn't be there. America's got a big work to do, and the old countries have got a big work to do. They've got to keep all the chivalry and honour and beautiful ideals, and America's got to set people free so that everyone can get some."

Mrs Doring Freeman said something about class distinctions irrespective of culture.

"Why, that's all right too. Don't you know that beautiful things have to be kept close, else they'll be lost. But it won't be always so. If America's awake to her privileges she'll make every soul so big and true that there will be no fear of having their things lost. That's why there mustn't be any pretences in America—no titles, no castles that take a grip of your soul and make you think just one way. The American's got to make his ideal just live in himself; and when he's got himself big and true and worthy enough to hold it, he'll see that it's always been hidden behind those kings and earls and castles and chivalry. They've been always there waiting, but men haven't been advanced enough to hold them. That's why they've had to be so closely guarded. But America's got a chance no other country has ever had."

"I am quite sure, all the same, that Mrs Wise is glad she's an American," said Mrs Doring Freeman.

"You bet I am." (Whatever the words Mrs Wise used, she always succeeded in making them sound musical and sweet.) "You bet I am, I know enough to know God's put me where I'll do best. So of course I'm glad. But Miss Menzies is glad she's Scotch, because she knows that's the best thing for her to be."

"Well, I always did long to have a queen to curtsy to," said the little lady beside Mrs Wise—her name was Miss Patty Larkin, and she was one of Boston's keenest faddists—"but I guess being as I am gives me more time to bow down to God."

"Yes, indeed, only see that you do it. Better bow down to a queen than not bow down at all," returned Mrs Wise. "That's where it all is. All these years men have had to bow down to something, and they didn't dare let them go free, because they couldn't trust them to bow down of their own accord. But the American's got to find out that he's going to get nothing at all unless he makes himself fit to be trusted. And then——"

"Well, what then, dear Mrs Wise?" inquired Mrs Freeman encouragingly.

"Well, I guess, the millennium," said Mrs Wise, with a burst of laughter.

"And what about the Englishman?" inquired Miss Patty Larkin.

"Oh, he'll be all right. He'll learn from America. No one will get left when the millennium comes. America's only got one devil to fear, and that's money. Seems like I couldn't touch money sometimes—it's got such a horrid feeling."

Her guests laughed right out. Mrs Wise was not the least disconcerted. "Now," she said, "you don't need to laugh. There isn't anything at all to laugh at. People's thoughts and feelings leave their traces just the same as lavender leaves its scent, and same as lavender stays where it's put, the thoughts go where they're sent, and all the ugly feelings of money-grubbers hang about those dirty dollar bills. And the man who has a lot of money has all those horrid thoughts right near where he is. That's why rich people aren't happy. When they reach out for something they run into all this mud, and then they get scared and pull back, and begin saying the world is hollow and everything a disappointment. If they'd only get rid of some of their old truck it would be all right."

" You must show us some way of purifying money," said a very rich woman who had been looking very much amused.

" So I could," returned Mrs Wise promptly. " Never spend a cent without sending a good thought where it's going. But no one must mind what I say," she added, smiling at us all, " I'm only a crank anyway."

They all at once told her she was charming, for no American ever lets an opportunity for a compliment pass unimproved.

Then a lady who evidently thought the conversation had been high-flown long enough, and now ought to be led back into intellectual channels, leant forward and said to Moira :

" Do tell me, for I never can remember, which is real and which is purely traditional, the Manx cat without a tail, or the Cheshire cat with a smile ? "

Moira informed her gravely, and she said how nice it was to have these misty points cleared up by one whose knowledge was gained by observation and not by hearsay, and then we went on to discuss various peculiarities in the products of our country as compared with America.

For conversational ability I think one must give the palm to the Americans. Each one seems able to do his or her part so easily, and never to overdo it. At home, if some adventuresome man expresses a new idea or suggests a novel departure, he is almost certain to have to conduct it from beginning to end himself. In America, no subject can be started on which everyone has not something to say. Whether he knows anything about it or not, has, after all, very little to do with the charm of his conversation. Nor do they tell anecdotes to the extent good Scotsmen do (a habit which always seems to me one of the riskiest forms of gambling, for one never knows whether one's prestige is to gain by telling a new story or lose by repeating an old one), and the intercourse flows much more smoothly without them.

Soon after lunch, at exactly the proper time, all the guests left, and Mrs Wise fled upstairs and rerobed herself in her loose gown, with very evident relief.

I was longing to talk it over with Moira, but Mr Linton appeared almost immediately, and she went off with him to a chair and a hammock conveniently set under the trees. His arrival was so opportune, I had no doubt at all Sue had telephoned him to come and see the "divine, demure" pose, especially as she had disappeared at the same moment he came up the piazza steps.

I found her in my room, huddled up on the bed, her arms clasped round her knees. She had kicked away her tight shoes and taken off what she would have termed her "waist," revealing a marvellous garment of lawn and lace and interwoven ribbon.

"Oh yes," she said dreamily, "I wanted him to see Moira. I put the chair and the hammock for them.

There's no one looks like Moira in the whole of Massachusetts State."

She added kindly, "You look real sweet too, Elspeth," but her thoughts were evidently far away. She looked like a tired elf.

I gave the offending shoes, now lying anyhow in the middle of the floor, a vicious kick. The memory of them had troubled me all afternoon. "Why did you wear those beastly things ?" I inquired indignantly.

"Oh, they helped me a whole lot, you don't know But it seems to me parties tire me," said this precocious, saddened child. "Seems to me we get together and act like everything was all right, and we know quite well everything isn't all right, and it's so tiring."

"Why, there's nothing very much wrong with Sue, is there ?" I asked sympathetically, for Sue's strong, alert little personality, in which I divined a great power of suffering, appealed to me strangely.

"No. Only I want so many things I don't want to want——" her eyes filling with tears.

"Mr Linton says everything beautiful is true and desirable," I said consolingly.

"I wish God thought so too," sobbed Sue.

But the next moment she looked up and smiled through her tears.

"Guess I'm enjoying myself all the same," she said cheerfully.

After that I gave up trying to understand Sue.

VI

"LET'S DISCUSS LOVE"

TWO days later I was alone on the piazza, sewing. It was just after the very early breakfast, and the newness of the morning mingled with the newness of the surroundings and made me feel very far away from all the old things of custom and habit. It is in the air—that sense of freshness—in America.

I found myself understanding, as I had never understood before, the great strength of the pioneer instinct, which forces men away from all that is dear and familiar and sets them seeking new, lonely countries, braving danger to life and limb and the sorrow of soul that is the exile's portion. It is surely the longing of each individual spirit to express itself, to live its own life with some meaning, some result. And in the old countries, where customs are strong and all paths well-trodden, it is difficult for one man to feel his power, and so he seeks new lands, where there are none to frown, and where he may try his experiments unforbidden and obey the spirit that impels him. Life must tingle with intense meaning to those people, bold enough to go out and wrestle for their ideas with nature instead of with man. And how far-reaching to their followers are the results of each decision they make, for a whole city will spring up near the spot a woman chose for her little home, and a whole new sect be formed by a single, strongly expressed thought.

I was deep in my thoughts when Moira came out of the house with a letter in her hand, hurrying towards me, quite evidently excited about something.

" I've only been in America three weeks, and I've had American Beauty roses sent to me—the kind of roses you always read about in novels," she said breathlessly. " And oh, do read my letter, Elspeth."

I took it. There was no doubt at all as to who was the cause of this excitement.

This was the letter :

"MY DEAR MISS MOIRA,—Outside the moonlight drenches the trees. They are so close about one forgets the city is near. So should nature ever shut out the bitter, the difficult life of crowded men. So should the light from above permeate, brighten and sanctify those tender walls. But within the walls one may admit the face of a friend. One flits before me—unbidden, but for that not less, but more, welcome. It is your face. Why ? Who can tell why ? For the slightest of our joys, as the mightiest of our sorrows, is veiled in impenetrable mystery. But I pay my debt for the unbidden charm. When this letter reaches you I hope the roses that accompany it will bring some touch of the sweet gladness the thought of you has lent to my evening. I am, yours very cordially,

"CHRISTOPHER LINTON."

"Dear me!" was all I could find to say.

"Isn't it lovely?" said Moira, dropping on her knees beside me and folding her arms on my lap. "No one at home could have written such a letter, and no one would if they could."

"Do you really like it so much?" I said, looking down at the eyes that shone into mine like stars. Moira has such clear, bright eyes and a forehead so white under her curly hair that I often think she should have been christened "Star."

"Of course I like it. How can you ask? I just long to know the thoughts people have of me, and in Scotland no one ever tells you. You see, Elspeth," she went on earnestly, "you never know what is real in yourself and what is only a dream about yourself till somebody shows you by appreciating. And perhaps someone is all the time appreciating you and loving you for something, but no one ever tells you. And you think it is just a high-flown fancy, and then at last it withers away and is wasted and you get ordinary and dreary and useless."

"Sue would appreciate herself," I said. I knew what

Moira meant, although she was rather vague, as we are apt to be on our side of the ocean, when we try to express subtle things.

"I know, but I can't, and it's so lonely. And oh, Elspeth, I feel as if I could be always so much happier and stronger and more what I would like to be if only people would sometimes tell me what I mean to them."

"'Shine like a star, then, in my night,'" I said softly. For there had been dark years before Anthony was my own, when I had been very lonely, missing the parents I had hardly known, and Moira alone made the brightness of that time.

"Oh, you're different," said Moira, "but even you say more in America."

"Where are the roses? I am longing to see American Beauty roses," I said, laughing.

"Aunt Hattie is putting them in a vase," she replied.

"Moira," I exclaimed, "you've been in America only three weeks, and you are already letting your elders wait on you."

Aunt Hattie came out at that moment, bearing a tall green earthenware jar, and in it the roses in all their glory.

American Beauties are worthy of the name—great, heavy, crimson roses, each glorious bloom set on a thick leafy stalk a foot and a half high.

I admired them with all my heart, but I did not forget to tell Aunt Hattie that she must not wait on Moira.

"Why, it's all a case of turn about anyway," replied Aunt Hattie cheerfully. "And suppose Moira marries an American, and has to run about after her young ones, do you want to do her out of her turn ?"

"But supposing she doesn't, what will St Antoine's think of her when we get home ?" I asked, laughing.

"She'd better look around and scare up an American husband right away, or else stay with me and be my own child," said Aunt Hattie. "Here's Sue. What does she say ?"

Sue had been, as I had gathered from the distant sound of bells and jerky one-sided conversation, engaged at the telephone for some minutes past. She joined us, with Mr Wise, who was just starting off to town.

"Moira's to go into Boston and lunch with Mr Linton," she announced. "He's going to show her the Old State-house and Fanuiel Hall Market. I've fixed it all up."

"But Moira's just had a letter from him, and he says nothing about it ?" I questioned.

"Guess he wouldn't spoil the poetry of his letter with business," said Sue. "Besides, he knew if he 'phoned me I'd fix it just as he wanted it. So I've fixed it for Moira and Aunt Hattie to go, and not one other soul. Momma was dying to go, but that wouldn't do. She's a bit stuck on Mr Linton herself, and she'd do all the talking. And I said Elspeth and I had an engagement together, so that's all right. Do you have roses as fine as that in Scotland ? "

" Oh yes, I daresay we have," I replied ; " but I don't know that we get many such letters."

" Mr Linton's a real elegant letter-writer," said Sue approvingly.

Mr Wise had lounged round in his own lazy way, smiling upon Moira and quizzically staring at the roses. He had read the letter too. Moira had held it eagerly out to him directly he appeared.

" Well, I daresay it's mighty fine and all that," was his verdict, " but I must say that fellow Linton has a tendency to make me dead weary."

" Oh, you go to grass, poppa. You've no appreciation in your composition," said Sue impatiently.

Mr Wise turned his stare upon her with an air of great admiration. " Well, I guess you'll live till you die if the Injuns don't get you," he said cheerfully.

What he meant is beyond guess of mine, but it infuriated Sue.

" You've got more'n a tendency to make me dead weary," she said, giving him a push with both hands.

He took the hint, and pursued his way towards the station.

" So I'm to take Moira to Boston, am I ? " said Aunt Hattie cheerfully, " and eat things I don't want to eat, and get all hot and tired out, and feel blessed and rewarded because Sue says I know my place as an elder."

"You've more sense than momma," said Sue shortly.

"I think I'll stay and be your child," said Moira, caressing her beautiful roses, "especially if Elspeth marries pretty soon."

"Bless you," said Aunt Hattie, delighted, "I'll be ready for you."

"What would Uncle Alexander say ?" I put in.

"Oh, Alexander—he's the limit for interference," said Aunt Hattie, in a voice that showed she remembered him well.

"And what's Uncle Alexander anyway ?" inquired Sue indignantly. "If he was my uncle I bet I'd tell him to go way back and sit down."

"We are taught to respect our elders, Sue," I suggested.

"Well, if a man's made so little of his time he's got to crack up his age to get himself respected, I guess he don't amount to much," said Sue. "That's the daffiest notion I ever heard expressed. If he's done anything, respect him. If he hasn't, don't. And the older he is the more time he's wasted. Being old don't cut any ice."

"You go over and be his child," said Aunt Hattie. "I'm sure he'd be tickled to pieces to have you."

"I'd assist his evolution some," said Sue.

I liked to see Sue get emphatic. She looked so alert, so compact, so very ready, just like an instrument finished and polished to the last perfection. She was wearing white to-day, with the neatest of collars and firmest of belts, and two dainty black ribbon bows in her hair.

" And in the meanwhile what are you two going to do while Moira and I feast on food and folly ? " asked Aunt Hattie.

" I'm going to pack up a little lunch and take Elspeth on the river," said Sue.

" Why, Sue, your mother hates to have you go on that old river."

" I know it, but I love to have myself go on that old river, and to-day I want to get away from the crowd and talk to just Elspeth."

" Well, as we don't expect in this advanced country to have one conscience do the work of an entire family, I reckon you'll go, so I'll hold my tongue," said Aunt Hattie calmly, as she rose and made her way to the house. " Put on some old skirt and a half-clean shirt-waist, Elspeth, for she'll drown you, sure."

No other conscience was consulted. Sue went off and packed a little basket with fruit and sandwiches and lemonade, inquired minutely what Moira was going to wear, and pronounced herself ready. And as I thought my dress sufficiently far from new to brave all the dangers of Sue's seamanship, I let her bring my hat and pronounce me ready too.

We were to go by " steam-car," Sue said, and she showed me her favourite short cut to the railway station.

It was strange to leave the trim little house and smooth lawns and, just by taking a short side road and crossing a little scrap of stony stray, to find ourselves in a wood that might have been the primal forest for all sign of life one saw there. Some day quite soon a little clearing might be made, and the dainty civilisation of a suburban home claim it as it had claimed so much of its surroundings, but now it was wholly wild and untouched. Closely the trees grew with heavy undergrowth of shrubs and delicate plants I could not name, and the ferns I pushed past were as high as my shoulder, and the sun-warmed air was pungent with the scents of moss and pine. Then a sudden path brought us to a cottage and a potato patch, and we reached, in a moment, the pretty, picturesque little railway station with its low roof and overhanging eaves.

The train rushed in with its clanging bell and elongated funnel, and we climbed the steep steps and got " on " to it. Americans always talk about getting " on " to a vehicle or a train, never " in " to it. It is probably the accurate term of expression, for it sounds so much more dangerous.

Sue took two little tickets out of a " ticket-book " and stuck them into the leather binding of the seat back we faced. Most people seemed to do this. I suppose it saved time for the collector when he came round to collect them.

" Isn't it hot ? " said Sue. " I pity them in Boston. It'll be cool on the river."

But to Scotch eyes that look wistfully and all in vain for sunshine in Scotch summers the brilliant sky could be nothing but glorious. I loved the strong, vivid rays that shone so straightly down, the sharp, sharp shadows, the dazzling white dust of the roads.

It is very restful to be, sometimes, in surroundings entirely new. In old haunts, where all things are well known and long-familiar, there are only memory, imagination and hope (and hope, alas, very readily tires, even though it may never die) to lift the days above the commonplace. Heart and will flag with the continual effort of seeking. But where all is new and untried, each sight has a thought behind it, and one remembers unwittingly the infinite stores of experience and possession yet unreached.

My eyes travelled up and down the car, noting with interest the tank for ice-water at one end, the dull leather seats that followed each other, pew-wise, on either side the central aisle. And outside the fields of Indian corn, waving in the sunshine; the little wooden homes, each, however humble, with its piazza and its hammock; the quaint conveyances and horses so bare of harness; the sharp-featured men; the clever, eager women—all made to me a moving picture, a story told by sight.

But the tiresome part of it was that I was always seeing something Anthony would like to have seen, and Anthony was not there to let me point it out to him.

" Riverside, here we are," cried Sue. " Look down there, how pretty it is."

She jumped down on to the rails and I followed her.

The river lay far below us on one side, and the cliffs rose high above on the other.

> " River that in silence windest
> Through the meadows bright and free
> Till at length thy rest thou findest
> In the bosom of the sea."

I had looked up the poem, and the verses came to my mind as we went down the long steep path over the low bridge to the landing-stage of the " Riverside Club."

And very beautiful in some of its windings is that River Charles, passing, as it does, through heavily wooded regions, widening sometimes into calm pools, dividing often to receive a luxuriant little island, wearing its white lilies like stars on its surface, and kissed by the bending willows that so richly fringe its banks.

Alas, as one peers down into the translucent water there are all too many tin cans and sodden papers to meet one's eyes, and much fruit peel and many cardboard boxes float slowly down past the lilies and catch in the reeds. Sue told me these windings of the Charles are more the resort of the class that cannot afford summer country quarters than of fashionable Boston, but even so I marvelled they had done so little to beautify, or even to protect them from the ugly traces of picnic and pleasure party. The Riverside Club was bleak and unlovely, its balconies unpainted and undecorated. Such a place on the Thames would have been gay with geraniums and lobelia in all the windows, and with hanging pots galore.

And yet, although it all looked over-trodden and bore the marks of close proximity to a big city, it kept, as so many places in America still seem able to do, its remote, compelling air of unconquered nature—a look of newly cut paths and newly yielded roadway to man.

We got a canoe, piled into it endless cushions, among which I most comfortably sank, and began to make our way slowly upstream. Sue, a graceful, strong little kneeling figure, paddling, with no apparent effort, opposite me. We had both taken off our hats, and I put up a Japanese sunshade, but no sunshine troubled Sue.

"I love it up here," she said, "away from everything. In the evening it gets crowded and tacky, and they bring on the gramophones, but in the morning there's only me and the pond-lilies."

I leaned over and pulled up some of the lilies within my reach, but gathered pond-lilies bring disillusionment. They are so exquisite on the water in their whiteness and purity, but they bring with them a long, dank stalk and close their petals quickly when they are taken out—providing a lesson against acquisitiveness.

It was very hot. Only the fleeciest and most tiny clouds were to be seen in the sky. From the banks one could hear the grasshoppers chanting their ceaseless song of summer, and the reverie of a June noon seemed to have fallen upon water, wood and sward. I thought if ever homesickness mastered me it should be here I would come, for rivers have a brotherhood, and here I could fancy myself at least not far from "my ain countree." But when I opened my eyes there was a tiny animal like a fairy pig scuttling along the brown earth of the bank, and near at hand a turtle lifted its ugly head above the water, while others crawled heavily among the reeds. And they most clearly denied a British river.

Sue brought me as far up as it was possible to get without carrying the canoe over difficult places, and then she drew in to the bank and moored the boat in the shade of an overhanging tree.

Then she looked at the little watch she wore on her wrist, and which I had given her, because I happened to be overburdened with watches and she had lately lost her last one. "It must be nice for you to see me always using your gift," she said once; "it's so seldom one can give anything really appreciated." She said it quite simply, with no air of stating anything but an interesting fact, which it so undeniably was that it made me wonder if Americans are fated to get always one step nearer the truth than we do.

The little watch said twelve o'clock, so we climbed out to picnic on the bank, and Sue set out the contents of her little basket. "Guess they're not enjoying themselves one bit more at their elegant repast in Boston," she said cheerfully. "Shall you like it if Moira and Mr Linton get engaged?"

"There isn't the remotest chance of such a thing," I said hastily.

"I wonder if they'd suit each other?" she went on pensively.

I shook my head. "They don't seem to me to harmonise. They may attract each other, but I can't see them blending."

"Mr Linton can blend with most anyone," said Sue. "He always knows just what people like, and how much you want him to talk and how much you want him to be silent. He knows without asking what book you are longing to read and brings it, and just what days you want to talk of sad things."

"He must be extraordinarily sympathetic," I said.

"Why no, it's just the line he likes to follow," replied Sue tranquilly.

"He must be a regular fraud then," I declared, thinking of those searching, gentle glances he turned upon one.

"Oh, men are like the dickens anyway, and you can't trust them worth a cent. But I kind of like them. Let's discuss being in love."

"I don't know how to," I replied truthfully.

"Perhaps you aren't really there," she suggested. "I wish you'd marry an American and stay in America. It seems such an unprogressive engagement—yours. Tell me how it feels—falling in love."

"How can one tell?" I said, burying my hands in the cool leaves and grasses beside me, and my thoughts going back to the moment when I came into the drawing-room at St Antoine's and, looking over at the little group about the tea-table, saw that Anthony—my friend—after five long years had come back.

Then, perhaps because I was in America, where emotions are shared, and not in Scotland, where they are religiously concealed, I told Sue about it.

"He had been away for five years and written very seldom, and I did not know when he would come back. Then one day I came in from the garden and saw that some people had come in for tea. And among them was Anthony, standing by the tea-table, taking his cup from Moira. He saw me at once and smiled at me, and he came over to meet me and shake hands. He said, 'You have been lotus-eating in the rose garden—it is the only thing that could make you late for tea.' I reminded him I had always been an Epicurean and he had always been a Stoic. I had grown up while he had been away and learnt to speak another language. But he always understood. It was all very simple, very ordinary. Then he went back and talked to grandmother, and I watched him cross the room, and felt suddenly that there were no more dreams for me. I had reached reality and would have to stay there."

"Did you long and long for him to propose to you?"

"I had not time. But anyway from the first day I knew he would propose to me."

" I call that dull," said Sue. " Does he know what you're thinking just as you think it, like Mr Linton ? "

" Oh no," I laughed. " He is not the least like Mr Linton. When Mr Linton is in love he will find a hundred reasons to give for it, but I am sure Anthony couldn't produce a single one."

" Mr Linton would be so taken up with the reasons he wouldn't stay to fall in love before talking about them," said Sue. " Go on. Tell me about how you feel now."

" He belongs to me, and I feel he could not possibly belong to anyone else. Even if we both tried to break away I feel we would still be tied in some unseen way we could not possibly undo. He seems to me the most real thing in the whole universe, and nothing can be real that does not include him. I know he feels with his whole heart about it too, but I don't know just how. He does not talk about it much."

" I know." Sue nodded her sympathy. " It's lovely, all that. But if some moment comes when you are looking and acting just as his inmost soul is longing for you to look and act, and he feels the picture you make is the one that's going to come back to him every sentimental moment of his life, he'll never tell you so in appropriate language like Mr Linton would. I know about Scotsmen. I've read about them in books."

" ' Dark and true and tender is the North,' " I quoted.

" Yes, but there's no reason that I can see why it shouldn't be communicative too. Can't you make him different—change him some ? " she suggested—" do some creative work once in a while? don't take just what's there from anybody."

"I find him altogether too troublesomely nice as he is," I said. "It would break up all my peace of mind if he got any nicer."

"I think you'd suit Mr Linton," said Sue suddenly. "He's always wanting himself adored past redemption. He told me once about a girl he knew way West, who always believed her husband acted right, and loved and adored him, though he didn't seem right adorable, judged by Mr Linton's account of his actions. He said she stayed at home and kept his slippers warm and never asked him where he'd been or got mad when he stayed away. I think he was setting her forth as some sort of an example. I just told him I supposed she might be very good and all that, sitting at home evolving her own soul, but if she'd been a little bigger she'd have managed it so's he got some of the evolution too."

"And you think I am not assisting Anthony's evolution?" I inquired, laughing at her emphatic expression.

"Well, if you adore him as he is, I guess he'll stand stock-still hitched, just where he is, and that's against all the progressive laws of the universe."

"That's why it's an unprogressive engagement," I said, enlightened. "But I look at it as a small bit of heaven, paid on account."

I expected Sue to disclaim, but she took it quite seriously.

"It may be your view is the right one," she said. "Then however did you feel when he went to India?"

"It is the only time I have known exactly what the word desolate means," I answered—not cheerfully. Those days will be marked in black letters as long as I have a memory. "I think I wished I had never seen him. I think I wished there were no human ties, no affections, no friends—nothing that could make me suffer like that."

"You know—I'd love to be unhappy in just that way," said Sue, looking rapt. "I want everything, everything in my life, every single sorrow and every single joy. Why, I even take nasty-tasting medicines sometimes, just to have had the experience."

Then, as I laughed, Sue laughed too. "It's part of life, you know, and you're a long time dead," she said, offering it as an explanation.

But that spirit of willingness towards life runs all through America.

It was towards evening when we came back, wearing the serene and dreamy peace that comes of long hours in the open air. We did not take the short cut for fear of coming across a snake in the primal forest, and treading on him in the long grass. Sue was afraid of snakes, and even rattlesnakes, she explained, were not wholly unknown in these regions. I felt I would like, just once, to hear the warning rattle of a rattlesnake. At home I suppose I would as soon hear the rumbling of an approaching earthquake. But in America the experimental instinct gets hold of you.

The Boston party had reached home before us. Mr Linton had come back with them, and was staying to dinner. Moira, also wearing an uplifted mood, born, not of fresh air, but of soul-satisfying flattery, was waiting in my room to tell me all about her day.

"I've had a perfectly lovely time," she declared, getting quite American in accent and expression—out of sheer sympathy, I suppose.

"What have you seen ?" I asked.

"Oh, the sights were not so interesting. I did not think anything at all of the treasures of the Old Statehouse. They have cases and cases of queer meaningless relics, chips from log cabins, and stones and sticks from the houses of presidents and generals I knew almost nothing about, and just like all other stones and sticks. There was rather a Puritan-Father atmosphere about it, but it seemed extremely bourgeois."

Moira has held in her hands worn yet brilliant missals belonging to the tragic Mary Stuart, and letters written by James VI., her son—emotional things, from the days when emotions made history, and wearing still, it seems, to sensitive fingers that touch them, some mysterious life from those long-gone, stormy personalities whose hands once touched them.

And what can "presidents and generals" give us of that glamour of emotion which alone sends a thrill down time ?

It was with her own part of the entertainment Moira was delighted.

" It was all like a dream, Elspeth," she said earnestly. " His house is so nice, and had been kept so cool with ice. We had lunch with yellow curtains drawn—it made a soft, golden light—and there were flowers everywhere. Then we had iced coffee in his Moorish room, and I sat on piles and piles of cool linen cushions. And he and Aunt Hattie seemed to feel it mattered tremendously that I should be happy. He seemed to put his whole heart and soul and brain into understanding and pleasing me. You know how men at home seem to look on you just as a sort of relaxation. Now Mr Linton—oh, I can't describe it ! It was like being reminded all the time that I have a real immortal soul—and it was my soul he wanted to reach and know and please. I'm so glad we came to America, Elspeth. At home no one cares about the inmost you. It is who you are or what you can do—can you talk or sing, or are you clever ?—but no one cares whether your poor little soul inside is being pleased or starved."

" Except the man who is in love with you," I suggested.

" Yes, and here everyone is in love with you. If they like you at all they follow the same line as if they were falling in love. But they follow the priest-line too. It sounds mad, but it is true."

And indeed I think Moira in her rhapsodies got near the truth. The American has a completeness in his sympathies our countrymen seldom reach. The British man seems to believe that every man has his own mission—"Leave sentiment to women, leave religion to the clergy, leave fancies to children," he says, and grows narrow in following his own idea of himself. But the American has no such notions, and accepts all within his reach.

Moira went on to tell me all that had been seen and said, but coming back always to that which had been one of her first remarks about America: "It is like a dream." Everyone says that of any experience that has had intensity about it. I hope it means that dreams are really prophetic.

Mr Linton was rather silent during dinner. I think he felt he had achieved a little triumph in the art of living, and now rested contentedly, wearing the laurels of success. Indeed the praise he had received from Mrs Wise, Aunt Hattie and Sue, added to the dreamy joy he could read in Moira's eyes, must have satisfied the most ambitious man.

But we were all inclined to be quiet that evening. There seemed to be no common spirit of sociability, so being in a free country no one tried to force it.

Aunt Hattie took her knitting and sat on the piazza alone. Mr and Mrs Wise were in the parlour, talking. Moira lay on the sofa in the library, making a brilliant picture in her blue satin Liberty dress against the dark walls. Little Montagu was huddled in the doorway, reading that evening's instalment of a newspaper story entitled "The Loss of Lovely Lucy Lossimouth, or Tricky Treve on the Tight Track." Mr Linton sat at one end of the window-seat in the hall, smoking a pipe, and Sue sat at the other, reading a magazine and occasionally looking up to make a remark to him. I was in the hall too, trying to read "Mosses from an old Manse."

This all sounds rather restful, and would have been so but that the discussion between Mr and Mrs Wise had risen to argument, and as there are no closed doors in America we could not help hearing every word.

Her husband seemed to be the one person who could irritate Mrs Wise. And to-day he had executed, or faile to execute, some commission of hers in town, in a manner she described, not inaptly, as "incredibly asinine."

Mrs Wise had none of the refined selfishness of over-meekness that Sue condemned so strongly. She stated her grievances in a manner peculiarly her own. She was explaining to Mr Wise to-night that the fact that he had first gone to the wrong shop, then forgotten what was wanted, and thirdly spent much money in getting what was not wanted rather than return empty-handed, was quite annoying, as it wasted money and caused delay, but it was trifling compared to the calamity he had inflicted upon himself. It seemed he had very considerably retarded his progress towards eternity by acquiring a habit of taking the wrong direction, of allowing matters of importance to slip to the background of what brain he had while he discussed the politics of a passing day with his neighbour in the street-car, and, above all, assuming the soul-destroying attitude that if you couldn't get the right thing the wrong thing would do as well.

No one ever got angry with Mrs Wise. She had a bewitching way of saying, just after the most personal statement, "It's wonderful how you love me when I'm so ugly," and that at once dispelled all tendency to resentment. But Mr Wise very often found himself bewildered.

"I wish you'd keep to the point," he said. "Leave my soul where it is and tell me how this is to be repaired to-morrow."

"Keep to the point, Harry, to the point," she repeated in sarcastic but very sweet tones. "The whole point is that you want to leave your soul where it is, and I know what's right better than to let you do it."

"I locate the trouble in the money gone downstream," said Mr Wise. "I wish you'd turn the energies you possess upon that."

"And go downstream myself ?" returned Mrs Wise "It's your soul going downstream that troubles me. What's money anyway ? Can't you lift your mind to the eternal aspect of the case ?"

"Momma does get mad with her husband," sighed little Montagu seriously from the doorway. "I'm sure I don't know whatever she married him for."

The solemnity of him made us all laugh.

"Well, he was poorer'n poverty anyway," he added in explanation.

"I know there's no hope for my soul, you see, but I'd a faint hope of the dollars," said Uncle Harry, as he strolled into the hall in the lazy, languid way so aggravating to his eager wife.

"You don't seem able to keep up with momma at all, do you ?" said Montagu patronisingly.

"No, my son. Taken as an illustration of the eternal fitness of things, my marriage is a dead failure," he said cheerfully, and he went off to seek consolation from Moira.

Of course a Scotsman would have said, "Women are so confoundedly unreasonable," at such a juncture.

After that we all lapsed into silence. I think my sense of peace would have been deeper had I not seen, from time to time, the long glances Mr Linton sent through the curtained archway to the sofa Moira occupied, the lamplight glowing on her brilliant dress. I suspected him of composing another letter to be sent to her to-morrow.

The combination of Moira and America, I thought, might present difficulties before I got them separated. I could not help being surprised that it was not Sue, with her sudden moods and quick, reflective nature, who attracted him, rather than Moira's gentle, sunny charm. I always liked to see Sue and Mr Linton together, she so modern, so alert, and he like a hero of ancient Greece, always gracefully, picturesquely charming.

But all these thoughts flew from my mind when, half dreamily raising my eyes to the window, I saw amongst the dusky shadows thrown by the bushes a tiny, brilliant, delicate flame spark and disappear.

My first firefly !

I slipped out on to the piazza, and again, against the dark bushes in the gathering gloom, another, and another.

I went down the steps and across the grass, past the bright hammock still slung below the trees to where the ground shelved suddenly to the road, and where in the daytime one could see other lawns and other slopes, almost as far as the cross-roads where the four cars met. Now a light moisture hung on the air, and with the evening shadows made it all a weird land of dusk and paler dusk.

But every hollow was lit with those tiny lights, sparklets like nothing but themselves—strange, ethereal, unreal little lights almost forcing the belief that the " little people " were dancing behind them.

Yet Sue and Montagu and Aunt Hattie and all the other people here saw and never noted the miracle.

I stood there with one arm on a low branch, marvelling how it is we are ever dull, or bored, or lonely, with mystery all round us ever ready to draw our minds far into regions of wonder—how we ever become enclosed in habit or custom and forget our thrilling, exciting, dramatic position here in the midst of the Infinite and the Unknown, and how, in spite of it, there yet come those blind, blind hours of unutterable pain when there is nothing in our ken but a lonely self and a heart throbbing bitterly against some one inexorable decree.

There was a step on the grass close by.

Mr Linton had followed me.

"You are independent of sympathy, Miss Menzies," he said, his eyes searching my face in the dimness.

"I ? oh, no one less so," I returned fervently. "What makes you think it ?"

"You are remote—elusive. You believe in reserve. There are deeper thoughts unexpressed below each you express."

"Sanctity dwells best in silence," I said, shaking my head.

"Why, how sad to think that," he replied, in a voice whose gentle sadness matched the mists around us. "Now I feel that all that is a necessity of human life should have a place on all the planes. Companionship is a necessity of human life, and speech a necessity of companionship. Then why limit it to the things of the physical plane and refuse it the region of the soul ? Does that not tie one more firmly to material things ?"

"One is afraid of spoiling the things of the soul," I said. "You know how texts become banal when they are worked in worsted and hung on the wall."

"Not very courageous to stay at fear," he said, smiling most winningly. "Am I afraid to give a dinner-party because cooks have been known to spoil the broth ? May I not remember my guest has a soul, and give him some thoughts for it as well as food for his body ? ”

“ But there’s a danger,” I persisted, for I remembered Sue’s remark about him that afternoon, “ that we may delight only in beautiful expression and lose sight of the necessity for action. Experience is more real than expression.”

“ But incompletion comes ever before completion. Does it matter that expression precedes instead of following action ? If I have a thought may I not tell it and share it till it is blunted by materialisation ? ”

“ But are those thoughts always quite real ? ” I asked.

“ Real ? And why not ? Can nothing be of truth that is not clad in matter ? May not our elusive fancies have the nature of revelation ? Are we not refining and uplifting human intercourse when we bring forward the delicate responses of finer, rarer moods ? Must I tell you only what you know already ? ”

“ I am afraid that is what we do in Scotland,” I said, laughing.

“ Ah, Scotland—your grey Scotland,” he said, a world of regret in his slow American drawl. “ What a heritage of thought you have there. How many prophets she has given to the world ! But, now note, Miss Menzies, they all bear the marks of your grey, chilly atmosphere. You have but one writer who wrote with the sunlight on his paper—your great Sir Walter Scott.”

“ Sir Walter Scott,” I repeated stupidly, “ do you admire him ?” It amazed me somehow that he should do anything so sensible.

“He was a genius—therefore he must hold every heart that has appreciation. How I have pitied them—your genius children of Scotland, fighting a forbidden way through frowning faces. One—your latest—how he suffered ! Did he ever—while he lived—know any but the stranger’s sympathy ? And short his life would have been had he not sought a more genial home, and one where hearts more readily open.

“Why do you not, Miss Menzies,” he said, looking at me earnestly, “take that as your mission when you are at home again—the combating of the national reserve? Let the West be your inspiration, and fight the hideous silence of your country ?”

The effect of hearing all these high-flown sentiments delivered with a strong American accent, and that peculiar American stress upon the prepositions, was really amazing, and, I must own, rather persuasive. I really began to feel I should like to have his mind follow mine along the subtle paths of fancy and longing, and find again with him the old, hidden pains and sorrows of childhood that get so overlaid as the years go on.

I told him, what I think is true, that a Scottish childhood is often a pitiful, pitiful thing because of the dumbness laid upon it.

“Why, then, the life of the elders is even more pitiful,” he said, “because they have lost even the power of regret.”

"I came out to see fireflies," I said, laughing, "and instead, I am being converted to Americanism."

"'But for all that's gone and come
I shall find my soldier dumb.
I must lay him on the shelf
And make up the tale myself,'"

he quoted dreamily as we came back to the house.

. . . .

"What did Mr Linton talk about down there?" inquired Sue inquisitively after everyone else had retired for the night and the charming man in question had taken a car for Boston.

"About the curse of Scotland," I replied promptly, "not, in his opinion, the nine of diamonds, but a dumb devil."

"Oh—he didn't talk about Moira?"

"Not one word."

"Seems queer. I was bound he would."

"Well, he didn't. He was absorbed in your friend Elspeth. Go to bed, and don't forget it. Matchmaking is a curse not limited to one country."

"Good-night, you blessed thing," said Sue affectionately. "I didn't think he'd enough sense in his make-up to appreciate you."

VII

THE MARY WILKINS VILLAGE

ONE of the plans we had set our hearts on carrying out was to visit an old New England village, or, as Moira called it, a "Mary Wilkins" village. Sue said she couldn't understand the attraction herself, but it was always interesting to see how things "struck us," and she would like "real well" to come with us. Mrs Wise, on the other hand, said she "wouldn't be hired to do it," explaining that she was so sensitive to vibrations she didn't care to go around much anyway, and the mournful airs in those unprogressive villages made her all tired out, so that she lost consciousness of higher things for more than a week. She always had a high-minded reason for not doing the things she did not want to do. Neither selfishness nor laziness entered into it. It was the working of her prevailing principle which bade her "keep in tune to respond to the beautiful harmonies of the universe." There were moments when I vaguely remembered that I had heard something about the spirit lusting against the flesh and the flesh lusting against the spirit and never yet seen anything in life to contradict the statement, but when I asked Mrs Wise about it she told me that that belonged to lower plane life, and now the human soul was lifting itself to its right sphere, and determined to function right there now instead of waiting to be dead to do it.

" But you go everywhere you've a mind to go. Your soul knows what's best for your evolution, and if it's clamouring for the experience of a half-dead village, you give it what it wants," she said genially.

So we started off one early, early morning, Sue, Moira and I and Del Day, the girl from next door who had helped to welcome us on our arrival. She was a soft, limp creature, with great, dewy, hazel eyes and abundant hair—apparently quite uneducated and ignorant, but with an originality all her own which made her quite charming and interesting. It was in America I arrived at the opinion that if you are not good at learning it is better to be as little taught as possible. Teaching seems to frighten all the impulse and instinct out of stupid people and to give them nothing else, or perhaps it is as Josh Billings, a person much quoted in the States, says: " It is better to know a little less than to know so many things that ain't so."

Del had invited herself to accompany us. She " liked like everything to go around," she said, and we were delighted to have her. She asked me almost at once if I had had much difficulty in learning English, and when

I explained it was my native tongue, she said she knew I was Scotch and had supposed it was only natural Scotch people would speak the Scotch language. She said she was delighted to have gained correct information. "I guess you'll be tired answering questions before I get through asking them," she said cheerfully. "It's perfectly elegant to meet you and learn so much, and you're so sweet and lovely anyway."

We reached Boston by half-past eight, but early as we were other people seemed to have been still earlier. There was none of the silence and the emptiness one finds in our towns at that time of day—no girls sweeping little heaps of dust from doorways across the pavement—no men shaking rugs on the steps—no scent of baking bread, that appetising odour which seems to usher in the early morning in all our cities. Boston stores are busy and thronged by nine o'clock, and that sort of thing was over long ago—except the baking, for there are no bakers' shops in Boston.

We took another car to the wharf, and there we "boarded" a little white steamer called the *Mayflower*. All New England steamers seem to be called either the *Mayflower* or else *Paul Jones*.

Although it was so early and the shadows still long and sharp, the sunrays were very hot, and we were glad to put our chairs on the shady side of the deck. Del put hers as near mine as she could get it, evidently with educational purposes, but Sue changed it at once.

"Miss Menzies doesn't like to talk much. She likes best to sit still and watch things," she explained.

"Is that so? Are they like that in Scotland? My word, if I didn't talk there would be mighty little left for me to do."

Plainly, as far as Del was concerned, Scotland stood or fell with us. We represented the nation to her, and whatever tastes and manners we betrayed, all our countrymen would be credited with the like. But of course, though the Americans we met numbered rather more than two, we were working on exactly the same principle ourselves.

Fortunately Del seemed to hold the "line of the least resistance" in the same respect as did Mr Linton and Mrs Wise, so she was not the least hurt because Sue placed herself between us, and I joined in their conversation only now and then—that is, only when "I had a mind to." One can talk at any time but I could not always sail on a little white steamer on blue, blue water along the coast of Massachusetts, and I wanted to lose no moment of it. People who believe in the line of the least resistance make very pleasant companions. There are a good many in our country who follow it quite persistently themselves, but I had to come to America to hear it preached to others.

It was always striking me with a sense of surprise that I was "really, really in America." I liked to have the American voices in my ears, and to watch the people, their faces, their gestures, even their dresses, all different one from another, and yet bearing no likeness to British faces or dress. This morning my interest was centred in a little group of coloured people: two men and three women, with a tiny child. Then, and always when I saw them, they seemed to me to supply a picturesque element, wanting without them, as if they took the place of a peasant class—people of the earth. For they have a dignity and a poetry of their own, the poetry of pathos, the indescribable dignity of race. One reads that racial genius—a dim obedience to the thoughts of their tribe, felt rather than known—in the solemn mystery of their dark eyes. It is strange how dignity always associates itself with powers not seen, whether in the robes and crown of a monarch whose authority is never seen enforced, or in the dignity of manhood which lies in its strength, controlled and hidden till demand upon it comes. Indeed, it may seem all human attributes pass into mystery ere they are explained.

I pointed out the little group to Sue and told her something of my thoughts.

"I can't abide them," she said. "I just can't. Of course I know they're American citizens, and evolving souls, and all that, but they give me the shivers. If they've a tribal genius it's a species of bogy. I'd be scared to death to live down South."

Our sail occupied about an hour, and then we landed at a wooden pier, opposite a huge wooden hotel—one of the most unsightly and uninviting hotels I have ever seen, and that is saying a good deal, considering the forbidding air most of them wear. But we were not to linger here. We could only glance at it as we hurried to the cars, for the rest of our journey was to be done by trolley. We could have gone all the way by car, but the sail on the *Mayflower* had been included by way of providing variety. Of course we appreciated it, but I had still to find a greater delight than that of speeding rapidly through the country I found so new and so interesting, with none of the confinement of a train which somehow takes possession of one so completely that the scenery on either side has no more reality than has a cinematograph.

And this was one of the most interesting trolley-rides we had yet had. The country was so wild and uncivilised, and broken, in a quite exciting way, by unexpected inroads of the sea. We sped through green wilderness, to take a sudden turn and find the waves so close their spray must have gone over us had there been a wind. We rushed away from it again, but apparently it had rushed before us, for we were crossing its long encroachment on a narrow neck of land that held only the track and the road beside it. A great mound of sand and bents rose up to hide it on one side, and there it was on the other, breaking in tiny waves on a stone-strewn beach. And no sign of life. I was wondering what a civilised, domesticated trolley-car was doing in this desert waste, when suddenly, after a long, straight run through country composed entirely of stones, we stopped at a little wooden station and found a little settlement of wooden houses all round us.

" Do people live here ? " I exclaimed.

" Why, they have their shore cottages here," said Sue. " Everyone can't afford Newport or Bar Harbour."

There must have been a mile or two of little wooden houses, each in its own little lot, and facing the sea. And every now and then we stopped at a wooden shed called a station and bearing some theatrical name such as " Surfside," " Waveland," " Silverstrand." It was the first I had seen of stations on the car-line, but there was no railway to these little townships, only the trolley and the grey, dusty road.

I suppose it is the great heat of summer that sends people here, sacrificing all other charm for the cool winds of the Atlantic, but the untidiness, the general air of care only for the present moment, the bleak beach, and the absence of all beautifying touch would have depressed me. The houses themselves were trim and neat, with wide verandahs running round and bright hammocks swinging from post to post, but nearly all were unpainted, and the weather-worn grey of a wooden house, rising from the grey of stones and sand, makes an unlovely scheme of colour. Like the suburbs of Boston, these houses had been set down on the land as they found it, but they had not been lucky enough to find it like a park. It was stony and weed-grown, so stony and weed-grown it remained. Some of the inhabitants had parted off their little lot with a low white fence, but none had been inspired to pull up weeds or make away with the big stones. They had built the little houses, as they might have pitched a tent, for a temporary convenience. It was a big camp, not a town, and in winter must be a wilderness of deserted shanties. Take it all round, I think America has not quite made up its mind what it is going to be ; and these little summer camps are part of a general experiment.

Americans seem to be entirely free from our tendency to identify ourselves with the place we inhabit. We grow up with a sense of duty to our house and land, or to our town, and even those who acquire the rights of landowner or citizen late in life rapidly become absorbed in it. Indeed our sense of dignity is inextricably mingled with our attitude towards our habitation. But American houses are built to supply a need. Americans pause and pass on, giving nothing, taking nothing. The house is but the necessity of the hour—they owe it no more than the glove they wear and cast aside. I think the inspiration of both lies deeper than a mere difference in racial taste or personal pride. In America all centres round the individual. He expects his country to serve him. He will die for it willingly, of course, but he dies that it may still be the servant of those who come after him. It sounds singularly sensible. But we, who will break our hearts for the honour of an old name, have enshrined our ideals in the four walls of our homes, for in homes and houses ideals were nurtured in the days when there were no books, and example the only teacher. They stand in our eyes still for the codes of personal conduct.

The little wooden camps culminated in a great pleasure place, called Nantasket Beach, but quite, I thought as we rushed past, unworthy of its Indian name. A great, grey " roller-coaster," where the tripper risks his neck and enjoys himself hugely, makes a hideous landmark. There are crowded wooden hotels, endless little restaurants, all advertising fish dinners for fifty cents, piazzas gay with hammocks and cushioned chairs, and that is the last of the pleasure world, the last of the newer world.

The car-line curves then away from the sea. We were going inland towards older regions—the withering, decaying Puritan regions that have not moved forward with the new nation.

There was no road now running alongside, only a single track for the car, cut so narrowly that the branches of the trees were within reach of our hands. We sometimes went through woods and sometimes crossed little salt lakes, round which the sad houses clustered—grey houses, close upon grey stagnant water—and as we went it seemed to me the shadow of old dreary Time grew heavier and heavier. The sun shone brilliantly, the air was pure, clear and exhilarating, but below it the earth was sad. We could not but feel it.

It was Sue who had decided at which village we should descend. She had taken Mr Linton's advice on the matter, but what characteristics they had sought in making the decision I did not know. It was a little bigger than the other villages we had passed, the iron rails of both trolley and steam cars crossed it, it had a large, modern church, but otherwise it looked like all the others—wooden houses straggling away from each other, melancholy paths and withering trees.

"It's peaceful, isn't it?" said Del tentatively, as we went up the grey road.

A little row of houses and one shop fronted a narrow green. The church, modern and ugly, was on one side; on the other, amidst a play of light and shade from the fringing trees, was the graveyard, with long grass and ancient stones. Before us, the long road, and here and there a wooden house.

Sue gave a comprehensive look about her.

"Peaceful?" she repeated, "peaceful?" You've got to be alive to be peaceful. This is dead. There isn't five cents' worth of difference between the two sides of that burying ground wall."

I thought of the "land where it was always afternoon." But that was a fancy for a passer-by to play with. Inside those little houses it was always Monday morning.

I wanted to see the church. Perhaps it was just a European habit, but perhaps, because it was a very Puritan village, we naturally tended to the influential centre.

Of course the door was locked. They were not accustomed to sight-seers here. But Sue fortunately knew that the grocery store was the proper information bureau in a place like this, and she and I crossed the road and went into the little shop, where we were most amiably greeted by the assistant behind the counter. We would be given the key with pleasure, he assured us, if we asked for it at the house of the janitor. "He won't be there himself, but his lady will give it to you—the third house along the road, the number is over the door," he said.

He looked so like a character in the old-fashioned story that would belong to a place like this that I began to feel as if I had left ordinary life behind and had got right into a story-book. It was the effect of the silence, the long, empty road, the houses with no sign of life. One naturally filled the blank with imaginary people, and the grocery assistant fitted so well he seemed a creation too. The illusion increased when we came to the little wooden house wherein dwelt the dignitary described as the janitor.

A paling about a foot and a half high protected the tiny garden, in which grew a profusion of bright annuals. A white pebble path about a foot and a half wide led through it. There were giant nasturtiums and virginia creeper climbing about the white walls, stiff white muslin curtains screening the narrow windows, and the bending branches of a rose-bush shadowed the three little wooden steps that led up to the bright green door.

"Prim" is the word that describes that little house. It was so very clean, so very quiet, with a circumspect air of knowing only days that were like all other days—a little fenced place where excitement never came and only such faint pleasures as could be easily held in restraint, where household duty reigned supreme from Monday till Saturday, and the pastor's discourse on Sunday the only admitter of thought within its careful precincts.

A hush as of long, unquestioning submission lay upon it. I felt drawn into it as we stood there, Sue knocking lightly at the little green door.

It was opened by a little woman who at once took her place in the story—a very thin, very clean little person in a high-waisted scanty morning frock of lilac muslin, with hair gathered high above her long, thin face. She showed no surprise at all on seeing us, yet we must have been unlike the people who usually knocked there. But I think surprise and curiosity were among the qualities that that little cottage had blotted out. Its mistress gave the impression of desiring to appear, and to be, entirely at our service for whatever we might require of her, but in the possible need of that service her interest in us began and ended.

"Good-morning," she said at once, and her whole attitude was communicated thereby.

Behind her, in the narrow passage, was a doll's perambulator, with a big "*Bébé Jumeau*" enthroned therein. Looking back, I felt sorry for the French *bébé* so strangely strayed there, but at the moment I was so possessed by the stern spirit of the place that I felt rather disapproving.

" This lady comes from Scotland, and would like to see the church," said Sue prettily. " May we have the key ? "

" With pleasure," said the little lady, reaching up to a nail behind the door and taking down a big key. It seemed a curiously intimate place for a church key to be.

" How old is the church ? " I asked, to show her I really was interested in it.

" Oh, quite old," she answered. " It was built in 1850. The tower was built later, but the church is quite old. Go in by the back door, through the kitchen."

" Thank you," said Sue, " then we'll bring the key right back."

" I suppose that seems a new church to you," she said, as we went back to the others. " I reckon you won't like it much."

" What does a church do with a kitchen ? " I asked.

" Why, it's for church teas. Congregationalists are great on church teas. I've been to them when I've been visiting, the kind of gathering momma wouldn't be hired to attend. I don't mind. I feel myself doing the ' girl-from-the-city ' act, and I enjoy being sweet and having the flock wonder if I can be saved and so elegant."

Del and Moira were sitting on the church steps, waiting. Del remarked that she had always thought there were finer churches in Europe, but seemed quite ready to yield her belief on seeing our interest in this one.

The back door led us straight into the kitchen. It was small, but very business-like, with a black stove, and shelf after shelf rising almost to the ceiling, with innumerable cups, saucers and plates upon them, and teapots in groups of five or six. There was an enormous blue china bowl, too, suggesting punch, but Del said lemonade. The cleanliness and tidiness were wonderful. I am sure each cup had its particular place, and never a one got broken. There was here, too, something of the air of the little white house. Duty is the Puritan sacrament, and the breath of it aureoles even a teacup.

Another door opened into the Sunday school hall—a great place ornamented with texts and maps, with a raised platform at one end, a cottage piano upon it. I suppose the church teas were followed by a concert—the hardest ordeal and greatest honour of local performers.

It was all curiously intimate. I began to feel a little intrusive, as if I were reading a letter not meant for me, or in some other way stealing thoughts sacred to someone else.

Sue went on tiptoe when she led the way across the hall, into the church. Moira looked subdued and a little forlorn, as if she were troubled by her own brightness in this bleak place. Del had an air of wishing she were somewhere else, but of intending, in spite of it, to see anything that might turn up to be seen.

But there was nothing.

Outside the quiet village lay as if in the shadow of a great constraint. Here one might have thought to find that reality, but no. As outside, there was the restraint, the order, the quiet, habitual mode, lifeless yet continuing. The constraining force belonged to the past. It had been. It ruled still, but it was invisible.

It was a big bare church, commonplace in every particular, with a high pulpit and sounding board, and shiny, cushioned pews. There was nothing, save the palm-leaf fans stuck between cushion and pew-back in every pew, to suggest we were not in an ordinary Presbyterian church at home.

But unmistakably we were not, for the indescribable atmosphere of reality can live with no outward sign. This was not Scotland, nor anything Scotch. Here, in this forgotten village, and this unlovely church, survived and reigned still the cold, stern force of New England Puritanism, and that strange, far-hidden "hope of the spirit" that so truly reigned beside it.

What strength it must have had—that stern faith of the Puritan expressed only by the uncouth, untaught tongue of the preacher, and commanding men so that they turned their hearts away from all the pleasant things of earth and lived according to the hard code it proclaimed.

It is withering now. The children of a later age refuse it. One feels it will die with these dying villages. It helped to build America. It must have gained its vigour from inner experiences too deep to be handed down in words, too strong to be forgotten. But fear was a quality of its force. It crushed as it commanded. The new day is divorcing fear from faith, and more tenderly can we think of those still older churches, whose first duty it is to cherish the miracle of sanctity.

" Do you like it ? " whispered Sue in my ear.

" No, but I am enjoying it," I whispered in return.

" Yes," agreed Sue ; " it's so picturesque and old-fashioned and sweet, but it makes me feel awful to think not one of them know they are being picturesque."

" Do you think little Mrs Winfield, who gave us the key, knows she is being picturesque ? " I asked.

" Why, no, she's taken up thinking she's in the true fold, and every manner of other thing is all outer darkness. And variety's of no account in outer darkness."

We tiptoed out of that solemn place. As we passed again through the kitchen it seemed to me that the air there held a gentle, kindly thrill. I think they were kind to sickness and sorrow—those Puritan people. It was dream and desire and wandering thought they ruthlessly crushed.

" We'll go to the graveyard now," said Del, when we had returned the key to Mrs Winfield. I looked at her to see if she was poking fun at me (for it was understood the expedition was chiefly on my account), but she was quite serious.

"Shall we?" I asked hesitatingly.

"Yes, indeed," returned Sue cheerfully. "Graveyard's the most expressive bit of a district like this. We won't find anything much more dead than what we've seen already."

The little green acre was just across the road from the church. The shadow of the tower must have fallen on it when the sun was in the west. We went in by a narrow wooden gate, leading on to a path that went only a very little way and then was lost amongst the thick, unmown grass, that rose and fell in grave after grave, and was scattered with deeply set, weather-worn stones. Churchyard grass and churchyard trees are rank. They have a heavy life, quite unlike the sweet, upspringing life of the fields and the woods. Thoreau says that where man makes his habitation, there harsh weeds grow up, that under his tread vegetation coarsens. It would seem that this is true too of his grave—not, as Omar chants, that

"never blows so red
The rose, as where some buried Cæsar bled."

Nothing bloomed here. It might have been dedicated to all the dark thoughts of death.

The sun shone brilliantly down, straight noonday rays from a cloudless sky, but though we felt their warmth on us, there seemed a chill from the ground, and the presence of a shadow deeper and wider than that cast by the old trees, holding the little place in sadness and gloom.

It was the same sadness that haunted all this region of the past, a quality of the old habit and mode that had been established here in days when all life seemed to watch death—and when death was horrible. It hung over the melancholy houses of the village. It deepened and centred here.

There was a quaint, Puritan name that carried an old-world flavour on its syllables on each grey stone, and on most of them a solemnly worded epitaph.

I knelt on one of the graves and made out the words —almost obscured by moss—below the name of Elihu Flaxon :

“ Behold and see as you pass by,
As you are now so once was I.
As I am now so you will be :
Prepare for death and follow me.”

I passed to the grave next it, and read :

“Here reposeth the mortal part of Mr James Flaxon, who left this state of suffering June 21st 1797.

“ Blest in the promised seed, supremely blest
His ransomed soul has entered into rest.
Now insolence of pride and priestly spight
Shall strive in vain to rob him of his right.”

This suggested a story. It read like the record of a martyr’s suffering, and I wondered what priest of what faith had with " spight " played the oppressor's part, but Sue, to whom I appealed, said it was probably just his way of alluding to the devil.

A young man who had died at the age of twenty-two said (or was he made to say it by those he left behind him ?) :

" Youth, think on me who in dust sleeping lie,
Where you must shortly be as well as I " ;

and Caleb Pingree, from a little broken stone, cried :

" Come hither, mortal, cast an eye ;
Then go your way, and learn to die."

They were all in the same sad spirit. Amasa Penniman (I think she had gentle eyes, and wore starched, stiff dresses) said :

" Farewell, my friends, dry up you tears,
Here I must lie till Christ appears,"

and a grim old man exhorted all passers-by (none of them doubted there would be passers-by) :

" You live, but you must die ; you die, but you must live ;
Grim death will come to all, the grave will all receive.
You all must come to us, you all must feel the rod,
And from the grave once more I say, Prepare to meet your God."

Of the Reverend Samuel Miles it is written that

" The sweet remembrance of the just
Shall flourish when he lies in dust,"

while of "Eunice, his Consort," that "she was an example of virtue and prudence, an ornament to her family and died peculiarly lamented."

Lieutenant David Holbrook and his sons Moses and Jonathan lie under one stone, with the dark branches of an ancient yew half hiding it.

"Come listen and attend.
The father and his friend
Lie sleeping in the dust.
Both old and young, forsake your sins
For you must follow us."

Even the only one whose sweet spirit left a good word of the world he was leaving and a tender regret for the joy his kind heart had found in well-doing, yet submitted at the end to the gloom and darkness of the prevailing thought of death.

"Indulgent world, I bid adieu.
Farewell, dear friends, farewell to you.
No more kindness can I show
To any creature here below.
I am mortal in my tomb
To sleep awhile till Jesus come."

I could not help wondering if a belief in the intercession of saints would not have done much to soften and inspire the poetry of their epitaphs. Fear, danger, the gloom of a terrible threat—under these the old Puritans spent their lives, making of them a long opportunity of reproof, counsel and warning. Many must have been the meditations among the tombs, when epitaphs were plainly written more for the edification of the living than in memory of the dead. These people served an idea indeed, and asked no other thing of life than to serve it well, though it banished pleasure and merriment from all their days. Can one wonder that those who come after, in violent reaction from the oppression and darkness, demand that ideas shall serve man ? In that dark place, with the shadow of the past so cold and heavy upon it, my heart ran out to the New Thought, even to that strange cult who demand health and wealth as faith's first gifts. And then I fell to dreaming of the perfect blending of the two, the hidden obedience to God's voice in the Ideal, the frank service of man in infinite tenderness towards all—making the two Christian commandments one, as they were meant to be.

" It's all very nice and clever," said Sue, crossing over the mounds to me, " but it seems rather pointless if you consider they don't know they're dead."

" They enjoyed it by anticipation," I suggested.

" Then they deceived themselves, for here we are, walking around, not a bit impressed. I'm going to be cremated anyway, so that wastes all their talk about lying in dust, 'sfar as I'm concerned."

Sue had no more respect for people who chanced to be dead than for people who chanced to be old. " It's all a question of time," she put it, " I can't kow-tow to chronology."

Del and Moira had both fled some time ago, and now called to us that it was past lunch-time. So we left the ancient Puritans and picnicked in the woods, with the murmurous sound of innumerable grasshoppers making music about us.

The sunshine vanished in the afternoon, and a strong rain beat on the cars as we made our journey back. It held off in grey clouds as the *Mayflower* steamed back to Boston, and the mists descending on the city seemed to draw it too into the region of dream and fancy. Sky and sea were grey, and the coast itself was grey, and Boston harbour, wrapped in mists, with a ghost of white steam rising into it from one wharf, and all the slender black masts springing sharply out of it, and the cobwebby rigging mingling with it, was a symphony in grey, worthy of Whistler.

. . . .

In spite of the rain Mr Linton came out from Boston that evening. It was late when he came. Sue was making extremely good and very strong Turkish coffee at a little table in the hall. Mrs Wise had suggested it, and we felt it was meant in some way to counteract the events of the day.

Mr Linton had been hard worked all day and he looked tired out, but he seemed to consider that to come here and learn our impressions of the expedition was part of the day's work. With Americans things are not so rigorously labelled " duty " or " diversion " as with us. Of course in this they are more truthful.

“ Why ever did you make them go to any such place ? ” demanded Mrs Wise, who did not need to be told that Sue had taken his advice in the matter. “ If you’d applied your soul to the problem you could have located them where there was some sign of history or romance.”

“ Miss Menzies hasn’t come to America to study history or romance, but the realities of the human spirit,” he answered tranquilly.

“ I never go to a place like that without remembering the story of the Roman Catholic bishop,” said Mr Wise, “who said on some anniversary, ‘ On this day two hundred and seventy years ago the Pilgrim Fathers landed on Plymouth Rock, and I wish Plymouth Rock had landed on them.’ ”

“ They’re like dead branches withering off,” declared Mrs Wise earnestly. “ If people won’t progress, they must retrogress, and the old Puritans won’t move with the world. Why, you don’t begin to know the deadness that lies on those poor souls. Cape Cod way there was a poor woman who slaved for her husband day by day and week by week, and never a bit of progression entered into her life. She washed on Monday and made pies on Saturday, and her husband grumbled every day of the week—over and over again. He didn’t even introduce any variety into his grumbling. It went on till it broke her heart. And that day—it was a Saturday, and if you’re dreary Saturday’s the worst day to be dreary on—she cleaned up and made her pies and put them in to bake. Then she went and gathered up every smoothing-iron in the house and hung them round her neck, and crept into the cistern and drowned herself there, weighed down with smoothing-irons. That's a true tale, every word. Not even death lifted her to any dramatic conception of herself. Seems to me, when I think of that woman, I must start on a preaching tour right away and tell them their fears and bonds are nothing but shadows and show them the glory of freedom."

"I wonder if that husband took a drink before he found her," remarked Sue meditatively.

We laughed—except Mr Linton.

"I'd rather have Sue's impish irreverence than their fears," he said. "The worst enemy of the mounting soul is fear. And they were afraid of every attribute of the human heart. Don't be afraid," he said, turning suddenly to me, and speaking as if with his whole soul in his words.

"Am I afraid ?" I asked

"Yes, of sympathy and speech. Sympathy is the greatest force in the world—the true key to the larger life we all pine for in the prison of personality. Excitement and peril give expansion—meaningless expansion to the human soul. So, alas, do some forms of sin. That is why they tempt us. Expansion we must have. Sympathy is the real expansion, endowing us with all life. That is why the Prodigal was forgiven, and the Elder Son, narrow and satisfied, held up to reproach through the centuries."

" I am a Prodigal and old Sleeping-in-the-Dust an Elder Son," said Sue, accurately imitating his soulful earnestness.

" They took up with that extraordinary idea of keeping all sanctity from any eye but the eye of God," he went on. " Don't you let yourself be absorbed by any such mistake. It's just an elaborate form of denying that anyone has a soul besides yourself."

" I am sure I am absorbing more American ideas than I'm the least aware of," I said. He was far too persuasive to argue with.

" Well, I've a belief in our ideas that makes me content to hear that, Miss Menzies," he said.

" I know a few Scotch ideas you'd do very well to absorb," said Sue, looking at him keenly.

To my surprise, he blushed. They seemed to have an extraordinary understanding of each other, Sue and Mr Linton.

I suppose he thought the day's work was done then, for he got up and walked over to Moira and absorbed himself in whatever ideas she offered him.

VIII

BAR HARBOUR

Of course when it came to exchanging Boston for Bar Harbour I had my own characteristic regrets for the people and the place I was leaving, and Moira her equally characteristic delight and eagerness towards the new things we were approaching. But the difference in our attitudes deprived neither of us of Sue's sympathy, who found my faithfulness "too sweet and lovely and Scotch for anything," and Moira's keen anticipation "the most inspiring thing."

We left Boston at night, and they gave us the kindest and most enthusiastic send-off, after all sorts of little special attentions to mark our good-bye day.

"You know how to make an occasion of even the smallest incidents," I said to Mr Linton, a little wistfully, for I had had many experiences of occasions buried under what a modern writer calls "the debris of the day," and felt the sad ones would have been less sad and the glad ones more glad if some of the dust had been cleared away and a little time spent in celebrating.

“ We know how much of life lies in its memories,” he answered gravely.

So there were so many carnations and roses and books and candy about us when we took our places in the car that we hardly knew what to do with them.

Moira was delighted beyond words. “ Fancy having so many presents there is not room to put them,” she exclaimed joyfully. Moira was, I think, trying to assume the pose of the spoilt beauty accustomed to attentions, and trying to play it properly, but her childish exuberance of spirits and outspoken appreciation rather spoiled it from a dramatic point of view. But in America everyone cheerfully plays up to whatever pose you may choose for your own. In Scotland, of course, people would think it their duty to destroy it, and save one from the sin of affectation.

Mr Wise gave us many directions for our comfort on the journey. It was our first experience of “ luxurious American travelling,” and we were a little puzzled, looking for comfort among the luxury.

“ You tell the porter when you get sleepy, and he’ll make up your berth. Guess as it’s early in the season there won’t be anyone in the upper berth. But if you peep out in the morning and see a pair of legs descending from above, don’t get scared. The rest of the man’s likely to follow the legs, but it’ll be all right. Draw your curtains and no one'll disturb you. Put your watch and your money safe under your pillow."

"But surely the men passengers sleep in another car," said Moira.

"Not a bit of it. You get your berth dealt out to you in order of application, with no trouble about trifles."

Moira chuckled with merriment. The adventuresome spirit had taken hold of her. Anything that diverged from home ways delighted her. I don't wonder she was a little intoxicated. The change from St Antoine's to America was like changing from one planet to another.

We were coming back to them in the autumn, so our parting was a short one, and we waved very cheerfully as the train steamed out. Then we made what order we could about us, and before it grew late we settled for the night.

But as we looked round we found a great appearance of luxury, very little comfort, and no privacy at all.

As for a sleeping berth in an American train, I never really discovered how it was meant to be treated. The coloured porter came along and let down a huge shelf, and built up two seats that faced each other into two berths, one above the other. When the whole car had been thus transformed there was only a narrow aisle left between the two rows of low, curtained berths. Obviously one cannot shed one's coat and hat in the aisle, and I am sure they would not be there in the morning if one hung them up outside at night. And when one finds oneself in one's own particular little tent it is quite dark, hardly high enough to let one sit up, and it is a problem how to safely dispose of one's outer garments after having solved the previous problem of how to get them off. I slept with my hat somehow mixed up with my boots, my dressing-case sharing the pillow with me, my jacket and veil and gloves and purse lost somewhere in the darkness beyond my reach, my head resting very carefully on the pillow, because I knew it would be quite impossible to re-do my hair in the morning.

It was early when I woke, to wonder where I was finding myself. A breath of very pure, very sweet morning air had somehow penetrated the car. I parted my curtains and peeped out. Moira's opposite were still closed, but there were stirrings here and there. Three berths down there was the spectacle of a man's head above his closely pinned curtains, endeavouring behind this inconvenient and most ineffectual screen to dress. A little farther down there was another man, whose modesty did not require so many pins. I drew in my head and closed my curtains, and began a search for my property by the little light I could admit by the window.

But a narrow and low-ceiled tent seemed to me no place for the early morning. I wanted to find some place where I might breathe more of the clear air that was trying to get into the car. So I attracted Moira's attention, and as soon as we could, and as tidy as we could make ourselves in the tiny dressing-room provided, we went down the train till we came out on to the little railed platform at the very end—out into the wonderful morning air.

And wonderful indeed it seemed—the sunshine, light and purity that met us—as if the word morning suddenly meant far more than it had ever meant before, a quintessence of all fresh and early things.

We were going through the Maine woods on a single track, and standing where we did we lost all illusion of the train. There was only the track, running away from us in curves and the wonder of the woods.

Gloriously grow those woods of Maine, a panorama of endlessly changing, vivid, translucent green, trees, shrubs, saplings, undergrowth, lifting their green life above the earth in a prodigal magnificence, a lavish beauty, that comes as a heritage to all eyes that see it.

And yet, not there lay the wonder that caught me so strongly.

In the quietest corner of England or the farthest moor of Scotland's outer isles there is no faint approach to the fresh, virginal serenity of those lonely woods. It is marvellous, and of a quality to draw new and strange responses from one's spirit. I think the most poignant impressions America brought me came to me from those green, green woods in the state of Maine. At first one's heart runs out in worship, in indescribable ecstasy to the magnificent purity of it—to know next an awful oppression from the loneliness into which one's spirit passes, finding no response, At one moment it is the desire of one's inmost spirit, in the next it spells unutterable desolation.

" I believe the Garden of Eden felt just like this," said Moira, in rather a subdued voice.

And the sense of refusal, of intimacy withheld, increased, I think, when we had exchanged the train for the little white steamer that was to take us over to Mount Desert Island.

The steamer waited us at a wharf near the railroad. There was a certain bustle and hurry, baggage and people both in evidence. We were going to a fashionable summer-place, and many people passed to and fro here during the summer months. But the lonely serenity lay undisturbed on all around. Still Nature said the stronger word. The lonely land, the lonely trees, smiled at the slow efforts of man.

On the low bank opposite where the trees rose motionless among the morning mists, on a slender island that caught all the sunbeams, and no less on the little woods close about the wharf, the calmness reigned and conquered. Even two buoys, floating in the glassy water, looked accidental and unconvincing.

We sailed through the sea and the silence, and all about us sprang up little lonely islands. One may sail past Scottish islands, not unlike them, and see there no more sign of human life. But there the mystery of the past hangs like a concealing veil—the loneliness is the loneliness of desertion—here is the solitude that has never yet been broken.

Is this then the real wonder of the wonderful country? Not her marvellous inventions, intricate organisations, hurried art of life, but just that, after bringing man up to the last point of civilised sensitiveness, she can still show him glimpses of the world as it was before he touched it.

In an hour we came to the island that is scattered high and low with brilliant little houses.

On the wharf there was Aunt Hattie, waiting to greet us, with her little brougham on the road beyond.

"Well, now you're going to see another corner of America," she said, as she took us into her kind arms. "What do you think of it so far?"

"It's just the most wonderful adventure," said Moira enthusiastically.

"A sort of spiritual adventure as well as a bodily one," I added.

"You two form an elegant combination," said Aunt Hattie. "Gather up the impedimenta. Why didn't you eat your candy on the road? Now come and see my house."

Aunt Hattie had blossomed out into a wonderful dress of embroidered linen, and a hat of lace and flowers. She looked gayer too, and more energetic and bright. She could not afford, and had not the inclination, to live a fashionable, society life all the year round. Half the year she spent quietly with Mrs Wise, three months she lived at Bar Harbour, where many of her old friends came regularly too, and the rest of the year she spent visiting. " When I get back here," she told us as we drove along, " it seems to me nothing sad ever happened. I love it so, and I love all the bright dresses and happy faces and the sunshine. I feel all the time I am the social ornament I was born. But usually I am quite pleased to go back into retirement and mourn my sins and remember all the dear dead people."

Of the drive to " Sea-winds," as Aunt Hattie called her cottage, I remember only a sense of extraordinary brightness and clearness—bright clear sunshine, bright clear air, and bright clear colours. There was no " atmosphere " such as one is drawn into in the bright vivid towns of Southern Europe. No doubt the absence of all moisture in the air added to the illusion of " emptiness." Certainly the illusion is very strong there. Bright colours had been chosen, one felt, and laid down against the clear, blue air. The sense of inhabiting life was quite absent.

But of all the bright spots in bright Bar Harbour Aunt Hattie's cottage and garden seemed to me the brightest. We turned in at a white gate, meeting the first soft " sea-wind " that came laden with the scent of sweetbrier, and we drove up to a dazzlingly white wooden house with green lawn in front and great bushes of starry Cherokee roses round about.

Aunt Hattie led us in with the pretty words of welcome Americans know so well how to use, and believe should be used to grace even the slightest occasions, and we found ourselves in a pretty, pale, square panelled hall, with a Dutch door opposite leading out on to the piazza.

And through the Dutch door, whose upper half of glass was thrown open to the sea-breezes, there shone a picture of brightness that looked to our dazzled eyes like nothing whatever but a brilliantly painted cardboard scene hung there to give a gorgeous vista to the actors who went through their parts in this pretty hall.

There was the vast, circular piazza, with its polished floor, its white pillars, its scarlet cushions and scarlet and white awnings. There was the vivid, vivid green garden, falling in terraces to the sea, each terrace flower-bordered and set round about with white painted balustrade. There was the blue, blue sea, out into which ran a white pier, with a little white tea-house at the end and white boat moored to a floating raft. There was the greenest island in the world, against the bluest sky. And all extraordinarily, almost excitingly bright. They always say it is the dryness of the atmosphere at Bar Harbour that gives the hard vividness to its colours, and plays such tricks with perspective. This was exactly like a painted drop scene—flat, and a little crude. A clever scene painter, one felt, had contrived to force the brightness on the minds of the spectators looking on from the stalls, and had sacrificed a good deal of reality in attaining it.

And inside, could such a house be matched for daintiness, for prettiness, for an elaborate, satisfying, gorgeous pose of an impermanent pleasure-place—a triumph in tents, an extravagance in shanties ?

A low-stepped, curving staircase led up from the hall, a wide fireplace with ingle-neuks faced it. The pretty dining-room, with all its exquisite china nestled into a curved, shelved recess, opened its windows on to the piazza. Out of the white drawing-room a glass sun-parlour led again to the piazza. And all its dainty, elaborate rooms held the same exquisite, indescribable comfort, making one feel it was impossible to look for anything that was not there, or find anything there that was not wholly wanted. There are apt to be things in our houses for no better reason than that they were put there some time ago. But here someone, tuned to a perfect perception of comfort, had placed each thing in the only place it could possibly be, from the different cups and spoons in the pantry to the chairs in the tea-house at the end of the pier.

" Now where are my other guests ? " said Aunt Hattie, after we had breakfasted and had flitted round to our hearts' content. " I want to make you acquainted with them."

" Wait till I change my dress," demanded Moira. " I just can't endure anything not white for another instant." Moira was rapidly learning the fitness of things.

I have an idea that the other guests had disappeared just to allow that change to be made. It surprised me at first that those who live in doorless houses should have acquired the art of self-concealment so well, but later I concluded that it is just because the art of life is so well considered that artificial reminders are out of place. I am sure no American would willingly meet anyone suffering all the disadvantages of a night journey. But I never discovered if this sort of consideration was for our vanity or their own æsthetic taste.

When we came down, wearing white even to our feet (for Bar Harbour sunshine makes black or tan shoes unendurable), the other guests had collected on the piazza, and we were formally presented.

"Mrs Dare Worthington. Mr Denbigh. Mr Rayne," said Aunt Hattie.

"Pleased to meet you," said Mr Denbigh, a rather stout young man, very like an Englishman, with blue eyes that suggested he was ready to exchange formality for friendliness at the first convenient moment.

"It is going to be a great pleasure to have you here with us," said Mrs Dare Worthington, looking at us out of eyes the colour of pansies, set in a pale Du Maurier face.

"We are all very glad you have come," said Mr Rayne. He was Mrs Worthington's brother, and had eyes very like hers, with a sunburnt face and fair hair. There was nothing remarkable about him. He was an ordinarily nice-looking young man, with grave eyes, but at the first glance I had no doubt at all that I should like him best of all.

Mrs Worthington was a most beautiful person. She was dressed in white lawn, with here and there touches of pansy purple like her eyes. She was very pale, with quite black hair, and had an air of quiet, rather sad, dignity. She spoke of Scotland, but asked us no questions about it, as most people did. She had motored over the whole of it, and knew more about it than we did. Nor did she ask us how we liked America, but she said almost at once, with a quiet sweetness in her voice, that she hoped we would love her.

Moira responded at once, and I think she kept her word. Then and after I admired her, marvelled at her, and would have done almost anything for her, but love never came into it at all. Indeed, even at that moment I was left with a sense that she was asking us only to carefully pretend we loved her.

There is no lingering at Bar Harbour. One is there to be amused every moment of the day. Of course it may have been their artistic concealment, but I always felt quite sure that no visitor at Bar Harbour was doing even what is called fancy work. There was no antidote to the amusement, except occasionally the very real labour of preparing for it.

We were drawn into it at once.

"We must get acquainted later," said Mrs Dare Worthington. "We have to make the house beautiful for Hattie's reception this afternoon."

"We have to introduce Bar Harbour to you," said Mr Rayne.

"I'm going out driving," said Aunt Hattie. "I conclude none of my guests are aching to accompany me, but it reposes my nerves more than anything."

"That's all right," said Mrs Dare Worthington tranquilly. "Mandell and Willis will entertain Moira, and Miss Menzies will help me with my scheme of decoration."

So off went Aunt Hattie, and Mr Denbigh seized the chance of a moment alone with me to say in a voice of angelic friendliness and confidence, "Worst sort of a way of spending an afternoon. Shake your right hand off, jaw your head off, and then go around assuring everyone you've just experienced the afternoon of your life."

Then a cartload of flowers and palms came, with three florists, and Mrs Worthington put herself in charge of them.

Mr Denbigh and Mr Rayne both attached themselves to Moira, with an air of fulfilling a duty that was also an honour. I saw them wandering about the Italian garden, all three clad in white. No wonder American girls don't put on engagement rings till they are quite, quite sure. Not that engaged girls get more in our country, only they miss less. To be a young, free-hearted girl in America carries with it a certain queenship, and allows her to exact homage from men both old and young, and support from every older woman, so that nearly everyone she meets is either an admirer or an aider and abettor. And if the spirit of rivalry exists among the little queens themselves, they are artistic enough to conceal it. I think that comes from the responsibility they have to their own taste. I am sure Americans—in spite of the newspapers and all that is said to the contrary—care, first and last, more about their own taste than about the verdict of the onlooking world. And that is different from caring about the traditions of one's class, as we do.

"Have you any ideas about decorating?" Mrs Worthington asked me, as the flowers were carried in.

"None," I said promptly, for American methods of approaching the effective had long ago taken the conceit out of me.

"Why, then it must be my idea," she said. "Your Aunt Hattie is always delighted with my ideas."

Evidently at Bar Harbour too they shared their house and hostess duties with their guests.

Then she began to be very busy, graceful and charming all the time, but with a very real energy in her work. I, the three florists, and Aunt Hattie's coloured man-servant, all stood by to do her bidding. The coloured man-servant, by the way, had more taste and cleverer fingers than any of us.

The narrow porch in the front was made all pink and green with feathery fern and pale pink poppies—a fairy bower when it was done. The drawing-room was scarcely changed, but its brightness and delicacy intensified by the bowls and vases of pale blooms placed there. The piazza was a riot of wreaths when the men left it, and the garden had taken a foreign look from the palms placed there. But the hall—Mrs Worthington called it the entry—was darkened with green things till a very sombreness hung about it. Cypress branches hid its pale panels, and only purple flowers were admitted—a bowl of purple clematis in the fireplace, a trail of it at the end of the banisters, a few purple pansies on the mantelshelf.

"Why the shadows here?" I asked, as I watched them gathering under her direction.

"There must be a sad note somewhere," she answered, in a business-like voice. "The human spirit feels the necessity for it.

"Why, you know that," she added. "That's the first lesson in the art of life. Now, I'm the happiest woman in the five continents of the world, and very nearly the most successful, and if I didn't carry that air of melancholy with me, which you've no doubt observed, I'd jar every man and woman who had the ill luck to come across me."

Mentally I put that down as another of the untellable wonders of the country—the triumph of economy that means to force even sorrow to minister to human need.

The work got done with extraordinary rapidity. Americans know how to get through work, and never waste time over it. Then Moira and her court were summoned from the garden to give admiration and receive their own stage directions.

“How lovely, how lovely,” cried Moira ecstatically. “Oh, I’m glad I’m in Bar Harbour, I’m glad I’m in America. You make things look just as I’ve always wanted them to look. You don’t know how serious we are in Scotland,” she added, turning pathetic eyes on Mr Rayne.

“Why, then, if it makes you love America, bless Scotland for her seriousness,” he answered, smiling at her.

“Guess Scotland is very much like New England over here,” hazarded Mr Denbigh. “Spend their lives dodging the devil and going to prayer meetings. I’ve no use at all for New Englanders.”

“Don’t abuse your Puritan ancestors, Willis,” said Mrs Worthington. “They’re part of the foundation of this magnificent country.”

“Wish they were—and under the earth, where foundations ought to be,” said Willis Denbigh. “Can’t pull at all with the people I was born amongst,” he added confidentially to me.

“They certainly don’t appreciate Willis in his home,” said Mrs Dare Worthington kindly. “Now, listen to me. Moira must not stay in the piazza during the afternoon, but keep right down in the garden. She’s altogether too decorative herself, and mustn’t compete with those poor roses.”

“Can’t I stay in the hall ? ” asked Moira, calculating, I am afraid, the effect of her radiant self against the dark green walls.

“ Why, no, you may not. I’d as soon let an angel into purgatory as you into this entry. It would destroy the idea in either case. And Willis Denbigh, you keep out in the open too. You are altogether too heavily built for my floral structures. Miss Menzies and Mandell may go where they like. They are thoroughly harmonious people.”

Then she decided that if Moira and I were not tired, we ought to be, and she persuaded us both into kimonos and darkened bedrooms, where our lunch was sent up to us.

The American summer-house, shanty though it may be, is a charming place to live in if you love comfort. Its demands are not the stern, exacting demands of our homes. The old Scottish home has traditions of its own, the hours of its meals and its prayers are as the laws of the Medes and Persians. Its exactions are among the important things of life, but an American house is the slave of its children, their shelter or their playground as they choose, and makes no demands at all upon them.

And one may go to bed at noon and get up at four, and be gay till near upon morning, with no sense of exacting a privilege or making an exception that requires a reason. No excuse is ever needed, but that one wishes to do it. “ To be at one’s best ” comes before other rules in America.

IX

"FACES OF FRIENDLY STRANGERS"

"FANCY being plunged into a party with no time to long and look forward. That's what I call being really alive," announced Moira, all ready in the most festive of the dresses we had chosen with such care. "Oh, I hope I'll remember to be all the things Sue said I was to be; and Mrs Worthington too. I'm decorative—and I've to keep out of the green hall. And I think I'd better keep away from Mrs Worthington. She's so brilliant, she'll take all the shine out of me."

"Don't worry," said Mrs Worthington, overhearing her. "Americans aren't small. If they find a moss rosebud beside a Japanese orchid they'll love them both the better. At your home only one would reap advantage, and the other would suffer corresponding disadvantage."

"Yes, we are very narrow-minded," answered Moira humbly.

"I wish you'd say faithful and constant," I suggested; "you can afford to at this distance."

"I'm glad that you have discerned already that America is the place from which to view the world. Live in America. Think about the other places," said Mrs Dare Worthington's placid voice.

I had been fastening Moira's gloves at the top of the staircase, and Mrs Dare Worthington was standing in the hall below. One can converse easily at any distance in a wooden, uncarpeted house.

When we came down a glance convinced me that thoughts of Paris had brought her the wonderful dress she was wearing. Parisian fingers alone could have turned it out, and perhaps only the singular artificial grace of an American woman could have worn it to its best advantage. Wonderful wreaths of silken flowers in palest rose shades and pale, pale heliotropes curved about the white skirt, and over it fell another skirt of transparent gauze, with delicate lace and embroidery that curved with the flowers under it and gave an illusive, changing charm to the whole, so that some new aspect was revealed with every movement. And with it she wore a white hat of the most severe lines. I think it was the hat that saved the whole from "staginess."

"Oh, oh, oh," cried Moira. "Let me stare at you for hours and hours. I have never seen anyone like you before, and when I leave America I never shall again."

Our beautiful new friend smiled delightedly. She had a sudden, winning smile, but she never laughed. She could look pleased, but never affectionate.

" You shall not leave America if I can prevent it," she said. " My conception of life can include you very harmoniously. Now here's Hattie Hunnewell and the first carriage coming through the gate. Mandell, if Moira has not an entirely successful afternoon I shall consider you responsible."

I think Mr Rayne and Mr Denbigh had been remaining in the background " till wanted," for they appeared obediently at that moment.

Then we went out on the piazza.

Aunt Hattie stood in the doorway, with Moira and me near her, and I tried to keep my skirts from brushing too cruelly the flowers that surrounded us.

Mrs Dare Worthington moved to the low seat that ran round the piazza and looked contemplative and indifferent. I learnt afterwards that it was quite unusual for her to appear at the beginning of a party, but that she had done so to-day because of our presence. Even the wonderful Mrs Dare Worthington acknowledged a duty to the young girl.

Mr Rayne and Mr Denbigh looked as if they considered their afternoon's work was to be an effective background.

And outside the bright sunshine shone down on all the bright colours of the garden—the bright blue of the sea, the bright green of the woods. Afternoon had brought no softening change. It was all more like painted scenery than ever. There was not even a "glare" to bewilder one. The clear, hard lines of the peonies in the flower-beds were clearly traced against the white balustrade behind them. Hard into the hard sea ran the uncompromising whiteness of the pier. Hard against a hard sky was traced the rugged skyline of the low wooded hills.

The effect was compelling.

To use Mrs Wise's phrase, it "gave one a dramatic conception of oneself." I felt inspired, and I am sure Moira did, to play the part expected of me.

And a delightful part it was. Just to be charming to people so ready to be charmed, and charmed by people who knew so well how to be charming. And certainly Aunt Hattie knew how to start us with a big push towards success.

Stern Scotland might have frowned at her methods and called them vainglorious, in true Calvinist language; but Scotland was very far away that day, and we were both glad of it.

"My nieces from Scotland that I've longed all my life to have here beside me," said Aunt Hattie to the first guests.

"Well, and you're not disappointed now you have them," said that first guest, suggesting that her quick glance at us had convinced her once for all.

"Now, let me make known to you my two Scotch children, and you'll learn why I'm such a happy woman to-day," a moment later.

" Why, then I wish all lessons were as quickly learnt," said the next cordial voice, and a hand held mine as if loth to let it go.

" Well, I hope you'll be as happy in our country as I was in yours."

" I've always wanted to see Scotland, and now I shall want it all the more."

Then it was Mrs Dare Worthington who brought up some friend of her own.

" See, Mr Dering, we've robbed the very flower of Scotland to grace our afternoon."

" Come, Mr Vanestreth, and find out why Scotland is the home of romance."

But compliments did not trip off the lips of the men quite so easily. I think their wits are absorbed by the money market. But their deference is a wholly delightful quality.

There were certainly a good many people whose glance was more inquisitive than anything else, and who merely said, " How interesting," but when one has a dramatic conception of oneself even inquisitiveness is harmonious.

Meantime the garden terraces had become crowded. Music floated up from a string band hidden behind the shrubs. A boat from the battleship in the bay had been rowed up to the pier, and landed a number of officers and middies in uniform. Mrs Dare Worthington had moved down to the lawn and stood there holding a little court, much as if she were a royal princess.

It was the gayest sight. Whether the brilliance of the sun and the clear air were responsible, or the American guests, who seem able to make themselves " delighted and delightful " at will, or just that the two pairs of Scotch eyes had, till then, seen very little beyond their own country, certainly to Moira and me it all wore a more festive air than had ever graced a garden-party before.

Perhaps the newness of it all contributes—bringing an illusion of youth and freedom.

With us even a garden-party has its serious side. One feels it considers itself responsible to the traditions of ancestral occasions, and it is apt to be attended by uninvited ghosts of garden-parties long gone by. There are those who look about them sadly, missing faces who brightened these lawns and walks many years ago; and others see the wraiths of their own youth strolling past the conservatories with wraiths of other people's youth, whose present, material middle age is faithlessly forgetting on the other side of the world. There are " oldest inhabitants " and " people of importance," whose assurance makes them very dull, and there are young people much subdued by them.

And the festive element has all this to combat, and one cannot feel surprised that it seeks, if it can, remote and shaded walks, wherein to disport itself, preferring the shade of the trees to the shadow of the past.

But Americans are never afraid of their surroundings.

They are civilised to their pretty manicured finger-tips, yet with an absolutely free and untrammelled self behind. They wear their civilisation as they wear their pretty dresses, but the dainty personality and its immediate expression has the chief place. And one meets no young people shadowed by their elders. The young girls at Bar Harbour are as flowers to a garden or jewels to a toilet. All the sweetness and brightness and gaiety centres where they are and radiates from them.

As soon as Aunt Hattie left her post at the Dutch door, Mr Rayne bore off Moira and gathered about her the prettiest and brightest of the dainty girl guests, and before long most of the middies had attached themselves to the group. Amongst them Moira looked like a Greuze picture, strayed into a Gibson almanac. She was wearing soft white muslin, with a lace fichu and a big hat. There was no doubt that she was posing, a lazy English pose, contrasting very effectually with the alert grace of the jewel-like girls about her.

Meanwhile I stood near the polished stairway (I haven't a doubt I was posing too, but as I couldn't see myself I cannot say whether it was a success or not) and I talked for a minute or two with about fifty different people.

It was usually Mr Rayne who brought them up, and always he who gently insinuated himself between me and anyone who stayed too long.

" You must talk with as many different people as possible," he remarked, with his own very gentle smile, "as you seem to be taking America educatively."

Nearly everyone had been in Scotland, and said so. They seemed usually disappointed that they could not remember just where my home was, but they had all of them been as near it as North Berwick, and a good many of them had seen more of my country than I had.

"We had a lovely time in your country," said one lady, who carried an exquisite little gold bag, set with trembling diamonds, "but I don't want to be Scotch. I couldn't abide that prevailing sense of duty. It appeared to me to lurk in every turnip in the fields. It's a charming place to visit, because they don't take Americans seriously, but if I stayed and was taken as seriously as they take themselves I should perish right away."

I told her I believed she would, and I do. She seemed very pleased to hear it.

"Do you get homesick ?" she inquired confidentially.

"Occasionally," I answered, "but my sister never does."

She glanced at Moira. "I guess it will be when she's back in Scotland she'll feel the sensation of homesickness. And I daresay you'll find yourself considerably rested for your stay here."

"Well, how d'you s'pose you're going to like America ?" inquired a girl with features as ugly, and eyes as beautiful, as it is possible to see, and the lady of the jewelled bag slipped away.

" Very much indeed," I said, " people are so kind." I always felt my way of putting things singularly banal when I was in America.

" Are they ? It's a good thing for you you are getting your experience in a place like this, for if it was New York or Washington the folk wouldn't have time for you. Here they have nothing else to do."

I wondered for a moment whether she meant to be encouraging or just a little rude. The one was as far from her intention as the other. She was just saying what she thought. She gave me some orchids she was carrying. They had been distributed at a luncheon-party from which she had just come on, and she was anxious to get rid of them because they did not harmonise with the flowers in her hat. She explained this to me. Then she passed on. I never saw her again. I often wish I had.

In her place came a tall, pale youth with a very rasping voice.

" Do you happen to know a man called —— ? " he asked, looking as if he hoped several people were listening, for the name he mentioned was that of a well-known Scottish duke. I imagine he thought it rather good taste to describe so distinguished a person as a man.

I told him that the duke and I were strangers, which seemed to give him courage, for he went on to tell me the story of his own acquaintance with him and with several other well-known people. Very little of his account rang true, and I was getting rather weary of him when he suddenly changed the conversation and began to talk about poetry, and in a few minutes he had interpreted a poem with so true a sense of its deepest values, so sure a feeling for its spiritual meaning, that I have thought of it differently ever since. One must be ready for any surprises with Americans.

Then up to me there came a fair-haired, middle-aged lady, whose elaborate dress looked as if it had striven to combine real economy with an appearance of expense. With her was a slender young woman whom (as I heard after) some people considered a beauty and others did not, and who seemed to have lost her pose in consequence.

" I understand Lady Devlin is very popular in your country ? " said the elder of the two. " Is that really so ? "

I said all I had read or heard led me to understand the same thing.

" Her family have a cottage at Bar Harbour, did you know ? You must get your aunt to point it out to you the first time you take the Corniche Drive."

" Anna was always very ambitious. She began studying English politics from the time she was at school in Europe," said the beauty, who seemed somehow to announce pathetically that she had not succeeded in the part.

I felt that they both thought that I, from the land that is overridden by titled oppressors, would be just a little shocked to hear a peeress alluded to as "Anna."

" She knew what she set out to do."

" Yes, and she always saw that she did it," supplemented the beauty.

" Ah, well I remember one day, more than ten years ago now," said the elder lady, taking a suitable sadness into her voice, " it was when I lived in New York, I got a note from Mrs Muhlen, saying, ' I want you to come and see my Anna.' This was Lady Devlin. She had come home from school abroad, and was just going to make her debut."

They were both silent for a moment.

She really made me feel she had been speaking of a child who had died young and was now with the angels.

It was Mr Denbigh who interrupted them by coming to my side. He had been amusing himself by relating to a little crowd how he had conducted himself in the witness-box, during a much-talked-of divorce case. If his account was correct, it must have been a brilliant interchange of repartee between him and the cross-examining counsel, and the experience stood him in very good stead when conversation showed signs of running dry or losing spice.

" This is Bar Harbour ; all going in for expense regardless of pleasure. What do you think of the crowd ? "

" I am enjoying everything immensely," I answered.

" Daffy lot, Americans. So are you, though. What's that fancy of yours over there to spend your money on a king ? "

" Well, he's very decorative," I suggested.

" Oh, the king's decorative, is he ? But I suppose all that talk in the newspapers—loyal citizens, resounding cheers—that's all put in, journalistic packing ? No one cares really ? There aren't cheers ? "

" Indeed there are. Our king is a most beloved person. It's all quite real," I assured him. There are times when one gets quite irritably loyal in America.

" Is that so ? On your word ? And he costs like everything too. But of course it's your money, to do what you like with. I'm glad you're enjoying yourself," he added. " You look very nice, got up like that." His eyes travelled over my dress and then took a troubled expression. " But that's the worst of white, everything shows on it."

I followed his glance with dismay. Of course my dress was spotless. I turned to him indignantly, and he smiled and said, " Well, I'll take your word about that king of yours anyway," and he moved off, to make himself agreeable to other guests, in his own special way.

And I continued to discover varieties in the charming people who came and talked to me. Those who had said, " How interesting," seemed to have the courage of their curiosity. I was asked some most astounding questions. And I began to wonder if compliments in America did not mean rather that the speaker is pleased with herself than that she is pleased with you.

I said this to Mr Rayne when he came up to speak to me himself at last—just as the shadows were beginning to gather and some of the guests to depart.

" It might be both," he said. " The one always makes the other easier, and it does not really much matter which side you start from."

" I think you are a very sweet-spirited person," I said.

" Why, no," he answered. " I seem to believe in things, somehow, that's all."

Then, when sundown came—not softly, with a gently darkening atmosphere, but deliberately, like limelight carefully regulated and increasing shadows that seemed to be painted with the same hard brush that put in the colours—the guests all took their leave.

Every variety of carriage drove in at the front gates. Pale tan vehicles called " cut-unders," with curtains instead of sides, bore many of them away, and a sporting arrangement of seats on a long support of wood, which I heard alluded to as a buckboard, went on a dangerous-looking way with the others. There were no motor cars. They were not allowed at Bar Harbour.

" And it's not all ended. We don't have to go back to a flat and commonplace day," said Moira happily. " It's like a perpetual party to be in America."

" If the Scots applied their wits to destroying the flat and commonplace instead of preaching resignation, there wouldn't be so many long faces in your country," said Mrs Dare Worthington. " Mandell, it's up to you in the meantime."

" All my energies are waiting," Mr Rayne said.

His answer seemed to me to describe him very well.

All his energies seemed always waiting to do something kind and strong and chivalrous, whenever there was opportunity.

The house and garden were stripped of their decorations while we dressed for dinner. Aunt Hattie had arranged nothing for the evening, for, she said, after a night journey and an afternoon party we ought to want to go to bed early.

But that was the very last thing we wanted. The first evening at Bar Harbour was far too entrancing and vivid and picturesque to be shortened for any reason whatever.

We dined on the piazza, to Moira's delight. The round table was gay with flowers and the prettiest of silver and glass, with a little army of candles to give us light. Round about the tall pillars the awnings were partly drawn. Here and there the lights from the windows glowed upon their brave scarlet and white; here and there we could peep down into the twilight that lay upon the garden and the sea.

It had all been as daintily and carefully arranged for effect as a stage-manager arranges his background and properties for his actors.

We have things as dainty, and life is more truly picturesque at home, and people play their parts as well, and with a more real dignity, but this studied, careful, calculated effectiveness is American only. It has a curiously flattering influence upon the individual.

And yet, close at hand, one felt always the presence of the unconquered land. Just across the garden—and woods that men had not planted or pruned grew in reckless profusion; across the road—and hills rose that had known man’s footstep but a few years. Their voices and their presence still seemed to rise above those of the brilliant little settlement of painted houses that clung to them.

It intensified the ordered brightness of the civilisation, and that in turn seemed to reveal what desolation can lie in unfriendly, menacing Nature.

We went out after dinner, all except Aunt Hattie, who explained that she had leanings towards the comfort of the drawing-room couch.

Moira and Mr Rayne and Mr Denbigh strolled down to the tea-house on the pier. Mrs Dare Worthington and I took cushions from the piazza and sat on the white steps that led from the first grassy terrace to the second.

The air was full of the scent of sweetbrier, and all the night alive with the loud, never-ceasing whir of a million grasshoppers. Here and there a firefly blazed and then extinguished his tiny lantern. Low in the sky the new moon shone like a silver thread. The still sea was the colour of quicksilver. The island across the bar showed a gleaming line of white beach. To the left a little belt of land, thick grown with pines, ran down to the sea. Farther, a long promontory reached far out and hid the bay beyond. All around the hills rose, their forests a rough line against the sky.

And scattered along the shore, or clinging to the hills, were the gay painted cottages of Bar Harbour, glowing with red light from all their windows, and half-revealing the wide, luxurious balconies and piazzas where hung the bright-hued awnings and swinging hammocks.

It was all still, and quiet and scented, and yet all so dramatic.

" In such a night
Stood Dido with a willow in her hand,
Upon the wild sea-banks,"

I quoted dreamily under my breath.

" What book do you take that from ? " inquired Mrs Dare Worthington.

" *Merchant of Venice*," I answered, looking at her to see if she asked seriously.

" You think I should have known that," she said, smiling. " I studied Shakespeare at school, when I had to. Now I never read any but modern writers. I don't wish to sink my individuality in a past generation. One's tendencies belong to one's own age, and one must be entirely faithful to it if one desires to soar above the common rut. Tell me about yourself," she added, in a bright, interested voice. " I will do the same. Question about. It's a delightful game. First question, what do you think about on a night like this."

" The man I'm going to marry," I replied.

" I think of the dramatic value of being part of such an effective whole. What do you regret ? "

"That he cannot see it too and make it twice as delightful."

"I regret nothing in heaven or earth. What brings you the greatest happiness ?"

"Love," I said. I felt my answers were banal, not to say uncivilised, but they were true.

"Money," she returned. "What do you find most interesting ?"

"Revelation in religion and a new discovery in life," I said.

"My own personality is the most absorbing thing in the universe to me. What do you consider the greatest thing in the world ? That's the title of a book. You see, I'm not illiterate."

"Faith," I replied.

"Civilisation," she said promptly. "My dear, you are on the wrong path for either peace of mind or success. You deal in emotions, and, as you see, I cultivate appreciation. I banished emotion from my life when I was sixteen, and made for independence, on which everything important rests."

"Emotions are decidedly interesting," I suggested.

"Emotion is either the hand of God or of the devil. Neither of those two leave you much independence."

"But life without emotion would get monotonous ?"

"Why, not if you are sufficiently intelligent to place all your enterprise in your mind. I regard life as a mental adventure entirely."

"I daresay it is as sure a standpoint for happiness as one can get," I said, considering her words.

"Nothing's sure but death and taxes. It depends entirely on my income, and I consider it will be time enough to change my soul when I lose my income. On that day I shall take a carriage to the workhouse and think out a new philosophy harmonious with my new surroundings. The day you lose the interesting variety of emotional opportunity you have staked your joy upon you'll lie down and die."

"I believe you are right, but I don't know how you knew," I said.

"Americans are bright about discerning tendencies. We think of what is, over here. You think of what ought to be. I'm delighted to meet you here. I come each year, for it allows me to see something of my brother Mandell, and also Denbigh, gives me a breathing-time, and pleases Hattie. You are a charming addition. Contrast is an important factor in the art of life. When you return to Scotland you'll find your experience here has burnished up a number of bright spots in your old surroundings."

"It's quite a mental adventure to be here," I said.

"Everything's a mental adventure if it is regarded as such. Don't be in a hurry to get back. One gets the best of it nowadays, living among strangers. Duty went out of date in this generation and philanthropy replaced it. If you are at all bright you shift your centre according to the times, and look to the chance acquaintance rather than the blood relation. See the steamer coming in ? Isn't that a pretty sight ? "

It sprang into view on the iron blue water—the white steamer that had brought us in the morning, making for the pier, with night mails and night passengers. From bow to stern it glowed with fierce ruddy light, like liquid fire held in a frail white case.

It looked as if it celebrated a pagan festival and fitted its part in the weird, wonderful evening, for the pagan heart of things peeps out and laughs in America, as it would not dare to do in our country.

As the waves from its paddles splashed softly on the sea-wall below us, a little rowing boat tossed gaily on them—a ghostly thing in the twilight—and then we heard Mr Denbigh's foostep ringing on the pier.

" Have you been repulsed there or attracted here ? " inquired Mrs Dare Worthington, as he joined us on the steps. " I have been instructing Miss Menzies in the spiritual developments of American commercialism, but I believe she is the same sweet Scotch girl she was before I began."

" Mandell and Miss Moira are going around in the boat awhile. I judged it good to leave them," he said. " It's not my way to trip up any twoing."

" Mandell will fall in love with Moira," said Mrs Worthington tranquilly.

" Sure," returned Mr Denbigh.

" Don't suggest there are to be problems of that kind to deal with. He will certainly do nothing of the kind," I declared.

"No matter. She can turn him down," said Mr Denbigh.

"Well, that is not pleasant," I said. I just happened to know what the expression meant.

"All in a lifetime. Were you sent over here to forget some fellow ?"

"No," I answered, laughing. "That's the second time I have been asked that. Would you expect me to own to it if I had ?"

"Sure," he said again. "Why not ?"

"We are franker about the incidents of life than you Britons are," said Mrs Dare Worthington. "You waste time and emotion being ashamed of things you did not bring on yourselves and cannot banish."

"Here the Lord has to take the blame for what He has done," said Willis Denbigh.

"And as often as not your misfortune can be made up to you in the sympathetic interest of your neighbours," added Mrs Worthington. "It amazes me, the extraordinary absence of all art of life that characterises the Anglo-Saxon tribes."

"Are we as stupid as that ?" I asked, feeling rather bewildered.

"Every bit of it. But don't you worry," said Mr Denbigh genially. "You'll find quite a few things to say about us, if you look around a bit."

We sat and talked, with the scented night darkening round us, and the sounds of night creatures becoming more and more frequent, till the soft splash of oars brought the little boat back to the pier, and Moira and Mr Rayne came up the green terraces, Moira radiant with the new-found freedom that had let her arrange her own evening's amusement without permission from anybody.

Then we all went back to the house and woke up Aunt Hattie, and Mr Denbigh mixed drinks for everybody.

And Moira was the little queen, whose happiness seemed everyone's business, and they all said something pretty and affectionate to her when they bade us good-night at the foot of the stairs.

" One thing you've not to forget, Miss Moira, and that's to order us all around, whenever you've a mind to," said Mr Denbigh. " You forget Scotland there and take on American methods."

" Good-night, my blessed baby, and if you get to loving anyone more than you love your Aunt Hattie, it'll break her heart," said our dear American aunt.

" And thank you for all the Scotch poetry those blue eyes of yours infuse into the day," said Mrs Dare Worthington. " Mandell and I will take as much of it as you will give us."

And Mr Rayne smiled and said, " Hands across the sea."

X

QUEENS' COUNTRY

THE next weeks we spent entirely in the occupation Mrs Wise had described as "seeing what we'd see at Bar Harbour."

It was very amusing, very gay, rather exciting, and quite unreal.

That was the effect of Scottish training, of course, which accepts nothing as important that is only gay and amusing, and cannot understand "a perpetual party."

We began the party at breakfast. Everyone was as alert and interesting at breakfast as at dinner, and never did we see the flowers that had graced the table the evening before doing duty again in the morning. There were no lazy, relaxed hours in the Bar Harbour day. When people were not prepared to be at their best they retired to kimonos and seclusion. We started out soon after ten and went driving about in a curtained "cut-under," trying to get as many calls as possible paid in the shortest possible time, and passing innumerable other cut-unders and carriages, carrying most beautifully dressed women, all bent on the same business.

They seemed born, those dainty, exquisite women, just for this sunshine and these pretty, pictorial houses. They flitted into each other's bright rooms, said charming things to each other—I never heard flattery so mellifluous and so eloquent as on these American lips—and flitted out. They made me think of the humming-birds who darted about the garden of "Sea-winds." Like them they seemed to flash into view, then pause to extract sweetness from some flower, and be off again on a brilliant, mysterious way. They seemed as wonderful in their poise, their delightful fitness to their surroundings, and also in their strange illusiveness, their unconvincing, all-concealing frankness.

In each house we passed through a hall that was like the scenery of a play to the piazza, which had always rugs, awnings, hammocks, and a table set with punch if it was morning and tea if it was afternoon, and a hostess whose dress was invariably a joy to the eyes rose to welcome us with some charming unexpected phrase. Americans are fully aware of the value of the unexpected.

And all the other pretty people who came in, or rose to go away, gave the impression of having chosen the perfect moment, of filling even the tiniest part with the dramatic, easy grace of conscious perfection. Each one seemed to acknowledge a duty to the occasion, to realise she must enter it with a beautifying or enlivening touch.

I daresay they were posing. It was in America I decided there is a great deal to be said for posing. In our country it seems left for those who have the assurance of birth to fill their part in a manner satisfying to watchful eyes, and even they fail quite often. One sees people entering a room or walking up the aisle of a church looking as if they were fervently wishing that the distance before them might be miraculously shortened, and the well-trained have, for the most part, arrived only at indifference, and conscious perfection is a much more interesting thing to possess.

There certainly are people at home who are absorbed in their own attitudes, but the deliberate, conscious art of life practised by the American is not to be compared to the weak self-consciousness of a *poseur*. Americans are never self-deceived. They are aware of all they do, and silently pay tribute to realities they cannot fathom or understand. But the sentimentalist of the Old Country takes his conception of himself to be all there is to realise.

The men were less interesting than the women. We certainly very soon acknowledged—what we had been often told—that when the American man is nice, he is quite extraordinarily nice. But then that did not always happen. Moira said they seemed to have been educated in a girls' school. The chief difference between a girls' school and a boys' school is that the boys find their code of honour set for them by tradition and girls are left to find each one her own. And that might very well apply to a general view of American education. The advantage is that they are more at liberty to adopt an idealistically high one if they want to. But from the outsider's point of view it requires a much closer watch for the unexpected.

Yet it seemed an unmeaning life. They were all very busy, very eager. One half of Bar Harbour seemed to me trying hard to arrive somewhere, and the other half trying very hard to get something. But it was an unconvincing race. I am sure there was nothing in all the world or out of it they really wanted. It was an absolute necessity to them to be moving onward, not so much to " travel hopefully " as to travel feverishly, strenuously, unceasingly.

We soon learnt that the transcendental spirit in which dwelt Mrs Wise and Mr Linton was by no means the prevailing spirit of America. And I found out, with a sad sense of disillusionment, that to be sensitive to every shade of nobility is not necessarily to be noble. Sometimes it seemed to me that they went in for the essence of charm in their daily plans, and sought the essence of human qualities in their ready appreciation, and I wondered if they did not leave uncounted all the valuable properties. The saddest thing, for us who came from true-hearted Scotland, was to find out that to hear flattering, and moreover kind, discerning things was by no means to have made a friend. One beautiful woman, with calm eyes and a noble face, whose pleasure in us had been most frankly and cordially expressed, cut me in a most heartless fashion because she had discovered that Aunt Hattie was on friendly terms with a family who had offended some advantageous friends of hers. No doubt it meant that she too, in spite of her sweet eyes, was trying to get something she did not really want, and looked to those same friends to help her.

But Mrs Dare Worthington was never trying to get anything and never trying to reach anyone. If ever I was tempted to think Americans a little commercial in their ideals, and apt to hold nothing true but that which brought immediate and visible result, I had only to think of Mrs Dare Worthington to feel it contradicted. She was never travelling either hopefully or strenuously. She was just possessing the moment and allowing it to possess her. How Moira managed to love her I never understood. She was not like a human woman at all, but like an attitude personified. It was delightful to live with her, she was always so kind and so considerate; and successfully so, for she had much discernment. But it cost her nothing. She would not have been either kind or considerate if it had. It was just that her eyes saw and her lips spoke; a faculty, a grace. But nothing reached her to make her feel. She said there was "nothing sure but death and taxes," but she believed devoutly in two things—in her own brain and in Eternity. When she said, as she often did, repeating the words as if she found pleasure in the mere sound of them, " My mind can go on adventuring throughout Eternity," she had recited her whole creed. And in spite of Moira's genuine adoration I was her favourite, though she realised that Moira had advantages for other people.

But I saw no sign of " Mandell falling in love with Moira." He seemed very much more absorbed in helping her to enjoy herself in her own particular way than in monopolising her for himself. If there was an interesting man or pleasant youth at hand he introduced him immediately to Moira, and moved away at once if Moira seemed at all pleased by the new-comer. He managed, with amazing success, that she should always find herself at an advantage. He knew just where she would be admired, cleverly placed her there, and invariably effaced himself. When there was no one else to pay her court he then supplied the deficiency very well indeed.

" The idyll of youth is a precious thing. It is worth while helping to guard it," he said to me once.

I was really very anxious to take Moira home unengaged and fancy-free, but the fascinating Mr Linton continued to write her intimate and fantastic letters, and more often than I liked came books and flowers, with highly original reasons for their arrival, elaborately stated on paper. And could any elder sister refrain from remembering that Mr Rayne was quite extravagantly rich, and Mr Linton by no means so? But Mr Rayne went on playing Moira's game for her (I think he occasionally helped her to answer Mr Linton's letters), and seemed to have no game of his own to play. There were times it made me quite annoyed with Anthony, and I longed to have him in America that I might there illustrate to him the importance of the "idyll of youth," to say nothing of the idyll of love. He had taken our engagement with all the solemnity and reverence in the world, but with very little "careful art."

But we did not spend all our time in the painted houses. There were beautiful drives into the heart of the island, and a long, curving way called the Atlantic Drive, which went over high cliffs from which we looked down on a wonderful ocean, breaking on wonderful rocks, and another drive of winding ways that led past some of the prettiest houses, and gave us the brightest, sunniest view of Bar Harbour, where the sea was as blue as the Mediterranean and the colours bright as Riviera colours, and which was called, because of it, the Corniche Drive.

And now and then we were away the whole day, leaving the civilisation behind us and crossing the wild island till we came to another point of civilisation, where we lunched.

It was always Mrs Dare Worthington who planned one of these trips—sometimes because she wanted to be alone at "Sea-winds," and sometimes because she wanted to take part in it herself. I imagine that she found an occasional glimpse into the country profitable to her art of life. Probably it heightened the effect of civilisation.

It was one beautiful morning when the sun seemed brighter than ever, the sweetbrier scent more strong, and the haunting humming-birds in greater numbers among the flowers, that Mrs Worthington said dreamily at breakfast that she wanted a wider outlook for her eyes than the plans for the morning afforded.

"Hire a buckboard and drive to Seal Harbour," said Mr Denbigh, without looking up.

"Yes, you have guessed right," replied Mrs Worthington. "Does that idea please you, Hattie?"

"Why, I think it an inspired idea," said Aunt Hattie. In her eyes it seemed all Mrs Worthington's ideas were inspired.

"It will be my last interview with the memories of my girlhood for a year to come," said Mrs Dare Worthington in a practical tone. "Every other day is accounted for to the end of my visit. Go and negotiate a buckboard, Willis. I hope everyone means to come. I must have Elspeth."

Everyone did mean to come, and said so. Mr Denbigh went off to the telephone, and we made ready at once.

I was always glad at Bar Harbour of the early morning hours America uses and does not waste. The clear, early sunbeams and delicate shadows on the hills, and the dewy scents of garden and woods, made up then for the absence of atmosphere. There were still shadows of roses on the lawn when the buckboard drove up to the door.

“Why did you say you must have Elspeth?” I asked Mrs Worthington when we met in the entry, ready before the others. I was growing too to find compliments very necessary to my life, but I asked her that question out of pure curiosity.

“I get a spark from your contact with things,” she answered readily. “You can come and live with me whenever you want to.”

“You don’t need a spark from anyone. You are a brilliant diamond all the time,” I said.

“That is wrong. I never was self-sufficient. My gift is to get into the right surroundings, and my money lets me do it,” she returned.

“I am going to pray every night to find the right surroundings for myself,” said Moira, joining us. “I find they make an enormous difference.”

Moira had thought this occasion a good one to improve by wearing an American veil. She adopted some new American idiosyncrasy nearly every day. She had evidently studied the exact way to drape it about her hat, and accomplished it successfully before her mirror. And very charming she looked, with the nun-like folds falling about her face.

“That veil is a very good surrounding to begin with,” said Mrs Dare Worthington, who encouraged every American notion that came into my little sister’s head. “It will keep the dust out of your pretty hair, and it makes you look more demure than ever.”

“Why a buckboard?” I asked, as I climbed into my seat. " I can see the board, but where do you get the buck ? "

"When you come to the first thankyoumarm," replied Mr Denbigh, with that invariable look of pleased amusement they all wore when anything puzzled us.

We started on our exciting way, and I found the swing round out of the gate so exciting that I forgot to ask what he meant.

Moira's hands were up at once, adjusting her veil. She got it to look all right very soon, but one never sees an American girl adjusting her veil.

" Here we are," cried Mr Denbigh, and just as we left Main Street up and down sprang the buckboard over the uneven road. " Now you know what a thankyoumarm is."

" I suppose I do," I said, realising the advantages of bucking cheerfully instead of bumping unhappily over a bad road, and I suppose all roads were bad when buckboards were invented, " but that does not tell me why you give them that strange name."

" Why not ? Miss Moira calls them ' bumpy bits.' Altogether more gracious to say thankyoumarm."

I don't believe Moira said it. It took her several minutes this time to get that veil into its original folds.

Then we turned and began to go inland. On either side were wonderful woods, where pines and oaks and maples, ferns and wild flowers grew in a scented, untrammelled profusion. As we penetrated farther the air grew warmer and warmer—the heat was almost tropical, and the pathways looked new, the scenery grew sterner, with hills rising steeply and trees clinging as if for their lives.

Sometimes one is reminded of West Scottish scenery, but it is never really like it. The ferns and flowers are not our ferns and flowers, and one feels the hills have been cast in a different mould. Even the sea seems to chant a different note and rush on the rocks with a different sound. Such glimpses as one gets of fur and feather are unfamiliar and exciting.

And always to me—across the sunshine and the beauty—came the whisper of the wilderness—the menace of desolation from the world's untrodden places.

Earth is beautiful, full of tenderness and sweetness and strength, but to gaze out alone at virgin tracts of forest or prairie, or upon the winding curves of untamed land, penetrating and retreating from lonely sea, is to feel the horror that is hidden in Nature. Then one realises that to us (perhaps not to the angels, but certainly to us), all her charm lies in those aspects that show response to our own touch. There is more poetry in a half-concealed track, a tiny corn patch, or a little boat moored in a bay than in all the magnificence of tropical forests. In our little islands Nature's horror has been long banished. Here I felt it (though so faintly) for the first time.

I told Mr Rayne so when he turned round from the seat in front to speak to me. Somehow one usually told Mr Rayne what one was thinking.

"We must never take you out West then," he said, smiling. "But your idea is all right. We have a quarrel with old Earth as well as with God. It is a good thing for us that we have."

Americans give all things a personal application, but when Mr Rayne did it one felt he identified himself with all mankind.

As we were coming near our destination there was a sudden shriek from Moira.

"Stop, oh, stop. I see a house being moved."

"Why, have you never seen that?" said Aunt Hattie. "Pull up a minute, driver."

"Don't you move houses where you are?" asked Mr Denbigh. "What do you do when you want to get them budged?" And once more they all (including the driver) looked as if our surprise was in some way to their personal credit.

Eleven horses were somehow harnessed to that little two-storey house, and the driver was enthroned in the doorway, wielding elaborate reins and cracking a long whip.

"Oh, we must stay till they move," said Moira, and just as she spoke crack went the whip, the men shouted, the horses pulled, and then suddenly, with a creak as if all the wooden boxes in the world were being broken together, the whole front of the house gave way, and the horses pulled it away from the rest, exactly like the front of a doll's house with the hinges at the roof.

"Move on," said Mr Denbigh. "They've mismanaged it."

And we felt then, of course, as if the superior amusement of that incident were ours.

When we got down at our chosen place of civilisation, Moira's veil was a wisp of chiffon, strung across the crown of her hat.

"How many pins did you use?" inquired Aunt Hattie.

"Two," said Moira dolefully.

"It never could be done with less than nine, and I myself have used fifteen," said Aunt Hattie.

"But they look so unpremeditated and graceful, I never thought of pins," said Moira.

"You'll know after this that nothing graceful is unpremeditated," said Mrs Dare Worthington. "You move over the ground with considerable grace, and if you tell me you don't think about it, then I know your ancestors did."

"I'll get pins and meditate about them in the hotel," said Moira. "Evidently being American isn't as easy as it looks."

"When you want to be an American, let us know, and we'll arrange it for you quite easily," said Mr Denbigh airily.

"Shall I have much to learn?" inquired Moira, looking at him rather impertinently.

"No, we'll do the learning," put in Mr Rayne. "We arrange things that way here."

"It's the unlearning when Moira gets back to Scotland that terrifies me," I said.

"Don't you do it, my child. America is weak in her mission if ever you do that," said Mrs Worthington.

We went to the huge wooden hotel for lunch. This place was a "Harbour" too. All the little summer colonies on Mount Desert Island seem to be Harbours, but this one was not the fashionable place Bar Harbour is. Here was the region of shirt waists and short skirts and hatless heads. And the hotel was as bare a place as it is possible for human people to inhabit. The dining-room looked like the hall of a charity school—there was nothing but unvarnished wood and whitewash, a huge shanty, with no glorification even thought of. We like it suggested to us that a place will still be there if we return. An American likes to feel that he can very easily move on somewhere else.

After lunch we strolled outside, Moira brave in a veil that looked more unpremeditated than ever, but was bristling with pins, and had taken many moments meditation to bring to its perfection. The sun shone down with a great heat. We went down to the side of the deep-set creek by which this summer camp scattered its houses, and found a cool corner on the rocks.

Mrs Dare Worthington took off her hat and her gloves and found the most comfortable rock for her seat. She was very simply dressed that day in white linen, and even her hat had a fictitious air of simplicity.

" You always look part of the picture wherever you are," said Moira, taking off her hat too, and speaking as if to emulate the talent was her only ambition in life.

" Do I look like a ' summer girl ' ? " asked Mrs Dare Worthington. " That is the correct part for surroundings like this."

" No, you look like the picture of a summer girl," said Moira. " No summer girl in that hotel looked the least like you."

" I should be desolate in such an hotel," I declared. " It would be like living between two wooden boards."

" You are so used to the ideal of home over there you must have a semblance of it even in your hotels," said Aunt Hattie. " We are not so set on our traditions that we must always have them conspicuously alongside. We are busy attending to the thing in hand, and here the thing in hand is open air."

" And you get yourself rivalled by your house or your ancestors. I love your old castles over there, but I should not like people to be more interested in my house than in me. There would be a lack of stimulation in that," said Mrs Worthington.

" Let's discuss the merits of the two countries," said Denbigh, huddling himself up with his arms round his knees. " We'll begin with that king-man."

" No, we'll begin with the heiress who married the duke in New York the other day," I said very quickly, "and we'll go over everything your own newspapers said of the fury of excitement the New Yorkers indulged in that day."

If Mr Denbigh had been an Englishman, of course he would have said that the whole thing was caused by a parcel of women who had lost their heads, but I don't believe there is an American man who would ever speak slightingly of women with a big W and a general application, but he will at any time run down any individual woman on her own merits or lack of them, which our men will seldom do.

"Yes. We fixed that up on the scarecrow plan. Made a clatter to warn off birds of the same feather," he returned.

"If you want to live in peace and quietness with Americans, don't discuss international marriages," said Aunt Hattie. "They are resented on both sides of the water, and both countries have attained a proficiency in the expression of their resentment that makes any new words on the subject quite superfluous."

"I couldn't count the times I've been asked in Bar Harbour if I knew any lords," said Moira earnestly, "and I can't help thinking the question is practical, because no one has ever asked me if I knew any ladies or countesses—it is always lords. They would like me so much better if I could give a long list."

"Oh no. If you said you had once seen one in the distance it would open the way to pleasant little day-dreams of a possible visit to Scotland and a romantic meeting, and that is all our pretty buds want," said Aunt Hattie.

"Some day we shall get American ideals civilly symbolised," said Mr Rayne, "then there will be no more clamour over foreign symbols."

"I should prefer to have American ideals remain where they are," said Mrs Worthington. "Symbolised national ideals are the enemy of individuality."

"Americans are waiting for the crown that will fit both the nation and the individual," said Mr Rayne. "We shall get it some day, and it will be the most beautiful symbol in the world."

"Mandell, you are a visionary," said his sister disdainfully. "If there is anything in the world I have no use for it is a visionary."

"I don't know what a visionary is, and I don't know what I am, so I can't contradict what you say," answered Mr Rayne.

He was leaning back very lazily, his hat tipped over his eyes, but whatever his attitude Mr Rayne always looked alert. I never understood how anyone could be at once so dreamy and so alert, so idealistic, yet so watchful and observant.

"My brother is a person with no pet conception of himself," remarked Mrs Worthington. "That is why he goes through life without hating anyone. There is no making oneself disagreeable to a man who hasn't a pet conception of himself to run counter to. If anyone runs counter to any favourite notion I've got of myself I hate him at once."

"I wonder if I have any very vivid notion of myself," I said speculatively.

"Oh, you'll fall in love with yourself in a part now and then," replied Mrs Worthington, "usually to your own disadvantage. Moira will acquire the art with more regard to its possibilities."

"There's nothing so extraordinarily, gloriously nice as someone who gives you a lovely idea of yourself," said Moira, with enthusiasm.

"Exactly," said Mrs Dare Worthington.

"Wish I'd a cheerful notion of myself," said Willis Denbigh. "Outrageous thing being brought up in a New England household. Told so often you're a worm of the dust you get believing it before long. Makes you so plaguey truthful too. If I see anyone getting at all a pleasant notion of me I'm bound to say, sooner or later, 'You're wrong, my friend, I'm a worm.'"

"New England's very like Scotland," said Moira sympathetically.

"I'm doubting that," returned Mr Denbigh. "Method in the madness over there. Scotch training may be directed towards the attainment of virtue and a seat in heaven. Its practical result as often as not is a passage to America and a pocketful of money P.D.Q. Scots flourish wherever they plant themselves. New Englanders wither up. It's nothing to me if they do, but it makes me mad to have the Scotties getting fat on the same methods and keeping so darned close about how they do it."

"It is disgusting," said Moira kindly.

"Enough to disgust a jackal," responded Mr Denbigh.

"Our atmosphere suits puritanism," I said. "It goes with the winds and the mists and the grey cities, but it is unnatural in your exhilarating air. It would take a terrible crushing to keep down impulses in this atmosphere of buoyancy, and I daresay they've crushed more than they meant in the process. I think you'd have to be a transcendentalist, or else put a stone on your head, in air like American air."

"What d'you do with the fellows who won't shape in your part of the world ?" inquired Denbigh.

"Send them to America, where they get on splendidly," said Moira promptly.

"There's a whole gospel of peace in recognising that," said Mr Rayne.

"If I'm going to get my Scotch children back before they begin to droop for want of afternoon tea, we must order round the buckboard," said Aunt Hattie. "We've discussed rival merits so far without quarrelling, but there's no knowing ever how long the good angels will be with us."

We drove home in the clear, calm heat of afternoon. No mists had gathered, no change could be seen in woods or hills or sky. With us the atmosphere rings a hundred changes in the day, hanging moisture-veils and withdrawing them till mountains recede and advance, distance widens and narrows, a field is laughing, or melancholy, all in an afternoon hour. Here was a perpetual, smiling, buoyant good humour. A moment's anger in a storm, a moment's concealment in a mist, but no moods, no ghostly suggestion of unseen things lurking behind the woods.

We had tea in the den, a little room that was used on all useful occasions. Aunt Hattie said she felt happier there when she was dusty.

Moira flew for her camera at once, and Mrs Dare Worthington graciously and charmingly posed for her near the Cherokee rose-bush in the front garden, to gratify Moira's wish for a " picture of a picture of a summer girl."

" Though the chief impression the day has left upon me is a profound gratitude that I am not sixteen now, and that my mind has started on its eternal adventure untrammelled by emotion," Mrs Worthington said as she came back and joined us in the den.

I had formed the opinion meanwhile that she had never had any emotions at any time, but at sixteen she had resolved never again to pretend she had.

" Now, Mr Denbigh, please," said Moira from the hall, winding back her film.

Mr Denbigh was sitting on the piazza steps, looking moody. He rose slowly at her bidding.

" You don't mind, do you ? " she inquired anxiously.

" Tickled to death," he said politely, and followed her to the Italian garden, where there were peonies and the white balustrade for a background.

Then Moira flew off to pose Mr Rayne in another part of the garden, then Aunt Hattie, and lastly her pretty self, with Aunt Hattie to snap the shutter.

But when we all came in to tea, there came no Mr Denbigh with us, and I went out to summon him.

He was standing where Moira had left him, apparently looking at his watch.

He stood so still, and seemed so abstracted, I had to go right up to him to get him to notice me at all; and then he did not answer, just turned his watch that I might see a photograph in the inside of the case.

It was Mrs Worthington—perhaps at sixteen—the loveliest, angel girl-face I have ever seen, looking too pure and perfect to be human. Lovely as she was now, she had been infinitely lovelier as a girl.

"I was engaged to her when she looked like that," he said. There were big tears in his eyes. "Been tied up ever since. I get discouraged once in a while."

"Does she mind too?" I asked, feeling as if I had stumbled on a tragedy. Poor Mr Denbigh looked like a great, broken-hearted baby.

"Oh no, she don't feel things. She's not made that way." He said it with no more resentment or regret than he might feel towards a beautiful, scentless flower.

"You're one of the feeling sort too. Doesn't do, you know, doesn't do. Only thing I can do—feel. I see her a fortnight, though, each year—that's something. Mandell's all right. He always sees us through."

So that was why Mrs Dare had acted the "summer girl"—to celebrate this fortnight in which it was Mr Denbigh's privilege to see her. And probably there were memories enshrined in that little sunny colony we had driven to to-day.

And he could only feel—had never done anything else or earned a penny in his life.

I was feeling so American that day that it seemed to me quite a pretty idea.

XI

FROM A DIFFERENT POINT OF VIEW

WHENEVER I found there was an hour in which the perpetual party had set me free, I took a scarlet cushion from the piazza and went down to the pier, and sat at the top of the flight of steps that ran down to the floating raft, with the little boat moored beside it.

With the tea-house behind me, and only the sea and the green island in front, and to my left that one long arm of land that looked so remote and lonely, cutting the serene blue of the water, I was shut away from the gay painted houses, and could think my own thoughts and be homesick and sentimental if I liked.

Home longings catch you at strange moments. You think they are stilled, and suddenly, with the breath of some subtle scent, comes an intolerable sense of all the things that are not there, a heartsick longing for them, a sick hatred of all that is new, and, falling asleep, the gentle sounds of the night change in the mists of dream to sounds of home, and the heart shrinks away from the strange surroundings, and counts, in sleep, the days that must be endured among them.

So I was glad that I might sometimes come down alone to the pier—for these busy days were crowding out even my memories—and listen to the lapping of the water under the boat—one of the most consoling sounds the world holds. That sound is not the sound of the world's weary " No." It is like the first reconciling word.

Moira never suffered from homesickness, and never by any chance wanted to confer with memory, but she came round to the tea-house one afternoon when I was on my favourite top step indulging my heart in both.

I had really very little time to talk with Moira at Bar Harbour, the days were so busy, and when bed-time came we were far too sleepy for bedroom talks.

Moira was in white linen, with a blue ribbon round her hat. She seemed to have attained a certain remarkable " effectiveness " in her dress, yet she wore nothing that we had not chosen together in Scotland. It may have been a new poise, a new certainty in attitude and gestures, which communicated itself to her pretty clothes. I could only be glad she had not changed in any of the sweet, youthful qualities which made her her own dainty self.

To-day she had a letter from Mr Linton in her belt, a big box of candy from someone else in her hand, and a " college pin " I could not account for fastened in the ribbon of her hat.

"It is nice here," she said, sitting on the second step; "all so fresh and clean and bright."

"I like the blue of the sea and that lonely bit of land running into the water," I said. "This is one of the places I shall think of when I am back at St Antoine's."

"Oh——" said Moira, in a doubtful tone.

"You will take a long time to re-adapt yourself to St Antoine's," I remarked.

There was no answer, so I repeated the remark.

"Elspeth Elizabeth Menzies," said Moira (this impressive mode of address is purely American), "I was never adapted to St Antoine's, and I'm never going back. After America St Antoine's would be *slower'n cold molasses.*"

"America may get very tired of you, and you may be only too glad to have St Antoine's to get back to," I said.

"That remark is a specimen of what Mrs Dare Worthington calls 'English parental cant,'" returned Moira, unperturbed.

"Perhaps it is," I answered, "but it is the kind of thing that has been said so often to me that it comes natural to fall back on it when I find myself taking a parental attitude."

"That just shows how we bow our heads to slavish, meaningless custom," declared Moira. "No American would say a thing just because it had been said to him. He knows it would be the death of his individuality."

"Do you really like America so much?"

" I love it. I don't know how you can be here and not love it. And I love Americans. They understand. They don't see just what other people see. They look deep down and see real things. I feel as if it were worth all the dull years of being a Scotch girl at home just to have people realise it and love you for it."

What a glorification of vanity ! But Moira looked very happy when she said it. Perhaps even our vainest impulses partake of the nature of prophecy. Perhaps one of the joys of heaven is just the yielding up of all we have endured and suffered and experienced here, to an Infinite Appreciation.

" That is what we feel when the right person falls in love with us," I said dreamily.

" An American doesn't need such a big emotion to jerk him to his realisations," said Moira. I think she must have heard Sue say that.

" What steps are you going to take towards establishing yourself permanently here ? " I inquired.

" I don't know. Perhaps I shall earn my living. Perhaps I shall be adopted. Perhaps I shall get married. It would be very unprogressive to go back to St Antoine's."

" I shall miss some of them terribly," I owned, forgetting my homesickness. " Do you like Mr Rayne ? "

" Of course I do. Everybody likes Mr Rayne and he likes everybody."

" With a few notable exceptions. I wonder why he is such a favourite."

" He has a way of making people feel they like themselves better. Oh yes, Mr Rayne's ever so nice."

" And you have a letter from Mr Linton sticking in your sash."

" Yes. I promised to write to him. He writes the loveliest letters. They make me feel I'm in a novel, a sort of eternal story. I like people who can say interesting things."

" That sentence is first Sue, then Mrs Worthington, and yourself only just at the end. You are an imitative monkey, Moira."

" It shows I am progressing along the line of the least resistance," said Moira. " I'm assimilating America."

" And yet there are all kinds of jarring things and people. What about that man who quietly told us of the girls who had tried to marry him ? No Englishman would have said such things."

" No——" answered Moira dubiously, " but I guess they think them just as often as not."

" Saying and thinking cannot be regarded as the same thing in a civilised world of complex beings."

" Well, I'm sure if they say things once too often, we refrain from saying things twenty times too often."

" And what about the woman who asked you what your father was—out loud, before a whole crowd—when you were calling on her in her own house."

" She only asked out of sheer curiosity, and wasn't ashamed of it. There would be no progress if you hadn't curiosity."

" And you can't help seeing that people are important here according to their income."

" We're far worse about money," said Moira earnestly. " Mrs Dare Worthington says money is still the symbol of effort and attainment in America, and of course it's true. They had to get together property before there could be an America, but when they have got money they begin to think at once of family and tradition and proper dignity, and being one of the four hundred. We work the other way. We've got the traditions and the family and the ideals, and we leave them and go for money just for the love of it."

" And selfishness is quite an American characteristic," I continued.

" Now, why should you take it for granted everyone is selfish, and going to accept self-sacrifice from you, the way we've been brought up to look at it ? Much better think the people round you are kind and sympathetic, and would like you to have what you want."

" They have a tendency too to be superficial."

" Well, we are incomplete. We do things very deeply and absorbedly, but for everything that isn't our own special line we are quite dependent on other people. A muddly way of conducting life. You may be passing on mistakes from generation to generation just because you haven't time to test them. Americans are not so terribly specialist."

" Our way has more humble recognition in it."

"Their way is more prophetic. It's just a different way of accepting your limitations."

"You're a converted American, Moira. Mr Linton said you would be."

"It's interesting," said Moira, "and it's bigger. Americans are not content to exist all on one plane."

"We have attained a good deal by our methods," I suggested.

"Mrs Dare Worthington says you must not always be thinking of attainment. You must sometimes practise possession. She says that is the root of the difference between Puritan dogma and Catholic faith."

(It was just like her. She would plunge into the deepest truths to find some notion with which to adorn her dainty, personal philosophy, and no less wonderful was her capacity for leaving behind anything that in any way would hamper its serenity.)

"It seems to me Americans can give high-flown reasons for doing anything they happen to want to do," I said. "Everything has to contribute to their own particular purpose."

"It makes those things real," argued Moira. "Mrs Dare says nothing can be real if she can't apply it to herself, because she's the only test of reality she's got."

"Well, they say virtue is its own reward, and I believe Americans pursue it just for the sake of that reward. Someone told me the other day that sympathy was a highly important art to acquire, because it enlarges life more than anything. They pursue the enlargement of their lives and their capacity for pleasure with as much care and economy as they pursue large incomes."

"It's the development of the soul," said Moira.

"My dear Moira, what Americans call their soul is often nothing whatever but the governing spirit of self-will," I returned.

"Well, at home it's the governing spirit of someone else's self-will," said Moira, with unfailing cheerfulness, and she began to chant, "As we go marching through Georgia," which is the most inspiriting battle-song that ever was composed.

The truth was that I too agreed horribly with Americans sometimes. Indeed I think I was only prevented from agreeing headlong at all times, as Moira did, by old memories of sacrificed, silent, apparently wasted lives, held very sacredly in my thoughts: sorrows never told, renunciations hardly realised, in obedience to the old order of home traditions. And I could not believe they were wasted.

I communicated this to Moira, and she said it reminded her of sending good money after bad, and it must be worse to send sensible souls after silly ones.

Which revealed to me how slender had become Scotland's hold on her daughter, Moira Menzies.

"It is quite evident that our decision to come to America was an amazing moment in your career," I said, as I picked up my cushion reluctantly and we turned to go back.

But the conversation had given me cause for what Sue would have called "tall thinking." Moira's heart as well as her intentions had turned quite away from old St Antoine's. Yet, as soon as the angels made it possible, I too was going to desert St Antoine's and leave it very far behind, and it had never been easy to think of Moira alone there, contending with the interferences of Uncle Alexander. Even without the ambitious spirit of America to inspire me, I think I should have desired for Moira a more brilliant lot than Uncle Alexander would help her towards.

But if the more brilliant lot was to be found for her in America my approval would be more heartily given if Mr Rayne was to share it and look after her in it.

Meanwhile she had promised to write to Mr Linton, and Mr Rayne seemed perfectly content that she should do so.

We were going to a party that night. We usually were going to a party at night. Parties followed each other incessantly at Bar Harbour, but never monotonously. There was always something dramatic and unexpected about the hospitality of these brilliant wooden houses.

To-night we drove (late and in the scented dark, with murmurs and sounds coming from the dark that suggested the near presence of wild life, and gave a fine air of adventure) to a distant house built high on a cliff that fronted the Atlantic waves—an imposing castle of wood, brave with turrets and ramparts.

But imposing as it was its proportions had evidently not allowed of a reception-room sufficiently ambitious to please its chatelaine, for this had been built beyond it, after its own idea, and had no apparent relationship to the turrets. "Just like a permanent marquee," someone explained to me, and it did not seem incongruous, because no one could take seriously a wooden castle, with cannon-holes in wooden walls.

Six wide steps led from the castle hall into its reception-room. It is rather imposing to be announced at the top of a flight of steps and greet your hostess at the foot. Everyone who had on a pretty new dress made the most of the moment. Those whose dresses had had several opportunities for being admired came down with more speed.

Mrs Dare Worthington—in black that night, with a long chain of diamonds that gleamed like a line of white fire—made Moira enter with her. They arrived a little later than the rest of our party, and if they wanted an effective entrance they certainly had one. Moira's sunny colouring, with her pale blue dress, and the new assurance that had yet not marred her winsome youth, contrasted sharply with the regal, splendid, pale pose of Mrs Dare Worthington. Moira got several minutes' special attention from her hostess, and I saw many curious glances go to her during the evening. Mrs Dare Worthington's favour was evidently regarded as an honour.

But Mr Rayne remained beside her only till he saw her happily established in the gayest group of younger guests.

I felt myself sighing the sigh of a disappointed matchmaking mother as I sank into my own comfortable chair.

We had come to hear music, and deep, cosy chairs had been placed in many semicircles about the little temporised platform. There were a great many guests, but the room was so large there was no crowd at all—a sense of luxurious space instead.

It was all brilliant and beautiful and indescribably dramatic.

Against the pale panelled walls great groups of American Beauty roses were placed. The lights were set at cunning angles and deftly shaded, so that their glow reached the faces with studied effect. The great windows were open to the night, and the dark vistas there revealed were broken here and there by rosy and golden Japanese lanterns swinging just where our wandering glances would be arrested by them. There was nothing else, no pictures, no ornaments, only flowers, lights and human faces. One felt all else had been purposely eliminated. It was all a stage-setting—a background for the exquisite people gathered there.

Even our newest homes seem to have some touch from the gathered treasures of the past within them—there haunts them some faint spirit from the years that are gone, but here was only the momentary prodigality of one modern mind—the impatient expression of a single mood. Everyone must " make up the tale himself." I am sure there was nothing more to their taste.

By now many faces were known to me. There was one slender girl I always looked for—pale as a white flower, with great, clear, shining blue eyes, like someone artificially spiritualised, exotic, yet utterly girlish and sweet. She looked a little as Bonnie Kilmeny may have looked on her return, but poetical comparisons never really fit the American girl. She is the jewel of her own age and no other. Then there was Mrs Pickering, who had talked of peeresses at the garden-party. She was always busily trying to attain something, though I don't know that she always knew herself just what it was. But I am sure she counted every minute wasted that did not bring her nearer to some advantage, great or infinitesimally small. Perhaps it was all a game she felt she had to play. Perhaps she didn't really want anything at all.

And there was a nervous, shy, but very self-approving young man, Mr Tremain. He usually found his way to my side. He told me he liked to talk to engaged girls, for married women demanded so much, and with debutantes there was always the fear of misunderstanding. Being shy did not prevent him saying just what he thought. I suppose American self-approval is potent even in the shyest, for our bashful youth always seems impelled to say the exact opposite of what he thinks.

To-night he waited till I had taken a chair beside Aunt Hattie, with Mr Rayne on her other side and Mrs Dare Worthington and Mr Denbigh in the shadow of an open French window just beyond our circle, and then he came and took the vacant seat beside me.

"I waited to see if Rayne was going to take this chair, but as you haven't him I daresay you'll be glad to have me," he said in a friendly way.

I had not time to answer him before Mrs Pickering came fluttering up—the violins were tuning—she had not long to find herself a congenial and advantageous seat.

"Miss Menzies, I was hoping to be near you," she said. "I wanted so much to hear about your lovely Scotland, and I have thought of quite a few things I know you would love to hear. Perhaps there will be a chair vacant next you some other time."

I said politely that I hoped so.

She repeated that she very earnestly hoped so.

Mr Tremain gazed at the edge of the musicians' platform.

There was nothing for her to do but to move away and join a little group at the opposite end of the room, where she was welcomed so effusively that I gathered she had lost a trick in the game she played that night.

"I would have given her my chair," said Mr Tremain, "but she was so darned foxy about it she made me mad. Those communications did not amount to five cents. She wanted to be seen with this particular crowd."

Then the music began, and our moods swayed and responded to its call. Is there anything sets the spirit free like music ? It is like some sweetly insistent charm, bidding us first forget and then remember. When I listen to music I feel that all things are mine ; that I might renounce every earthly possession and still hold them all in infinitely truer, nearer fashion. Then the spirit unfalteringly proclaims its sufficiency—the concealing accidents do not exist.

And to-night, across the rich perfume of the roses, came pungent night scents from the woods without, and they met the song of the violins in mid-air and added an almost intolerable charm.

Then came an interval—filled for me by Mr Tremain's conversation. I am sure he too had appreciated the music, but he was quite ready to admit more mundane interests directly it stopped.

" See young Longstreth making up to Miss Kemp. I could tell him it's no use. She'll turn him down. He's always in too big a hurry anyway."

My friend of the delicately interpreted poem was evidently about to propose to an heiress—if rumour spoke truly the fourteenth so honoured.

" Do you know Elsie Ree ? See, she's got young Farrer beside her. Her mother's not here to-night but his will contrive a separation pretty darned quick, when she sees them together. They've both got to marry money, so they're just wasting time."

Shy men (perhaps because they are apt to be left with nothing but their own powers of observation to amuse them) usually know everybody else's attitudes and ambitions.

" I often wonder what kind of a girl I'll marry myself," he continued, looking round him critically.

" Haven't you any ideas about it ? " I asked.

"No—except I'm not going to marry money. My nerves wouldn't stand what I'd get with it. I could, of course. My name's worth it."

"What do you consider the most important thing to look for ?" I asked.

"I don't seem to have any kind of a notion," he answered. "Have you ?"

"Well, love is often considered quite important," I suggested.

"Too short-lived," he said regretfully. "I'm a nervous make-up, and can't run risks."

"Then what about a community of tastes ?"

"I haven't any tastes. The trouble with me is I'm too cautious. Fools do better. They rush in and get a footing where I'm afraid to tread."

"Are you anxious to marry ?" I inquired.

"Why, yes, if I can bring it off successfully, but I've thought so much about it I'm afraid of losing the anticipation and the reality. And we've never had any divorces in our family," he added.

"Nor have we," I returned gravely. 'I suppose you consider that increases the risk ?"

"I feel it so. How do you feel about it ?"

"I fancy I should consider breaking off my engagement before I considered divorce at the stage I am now at," I said, laughing. "Don't get engaged as long as you feel at all fascinated by that notion."

"I guess you're right. But I get a good deal of worry just thinking about what might happen."

After all, the problem of one's own life is a more or less pressing one at times with every one of us, and it would often be a more interesting subject than those we usually choose to converse upon. Americans always have the courage of their realities—they respect them and accord them dignity where we would give them a pretence of indifference.

"Mrs Dare Worthington is trying to find a wife for her brother," was Mr Tremain's next communication. "I should say she'd fail there, though she succeeds in most things. An all-round lover, that's Mandell Rayne. Mrs Dare wants to find a girl who won't outshine her in any particular, but who'll set every other man envying her brother's choice. She's up against it with a problem like that, though she can pull almost anything through."

Moira! Perfect, fragrant moss rose, beside a miraculous orchid—was this Mrs Dare Worthington's "conception of things"?

The music struck up again, but this time brought me no transcendent thoughts. I was absorbed in wondering if Mrs Dare could "pull a thing through" if Mr Linton pulled very hard against her. And I wished devoutly we had never met either the one man or the other.

When the last song was sung, Mr Rayne came and said, "You will have supper with me?"

Mr Tremain said, "I would have asked you if he hadn't, but I guess you'll like a change," and drifted away among the moving throng of people.

Supper was served in unique fashion. Table after table was carried deftly down the wide steps, and into the room—all ready set with flowers, and lighted candles on each. The big chairs were carried out, others placed about the tables. It was exactly like shifting the scene on a stage, and as we took our places the lights were lowered, so that the gentler candlelight might reign.

It was all more dramatic than ever.

" Are you still pleased with America ? " asked Mr Rayne.

" Do you mean this fairy-tale banquet ? " I asked in return, laughing.

" My sister would take your answer to that, and let it stand for the answer to my question."

" Yes—I like it, but I keep looking for something I do not see. I miss the ghosts perhaps."

" Or the soul," he said, and he smiled. " You must not let yourself get jarred. We are amusing ourselves sometimes, and sometimes we are making mistakes, but I believe in my country."

" Which country do you like best ? " He seemed so impersonal it was possible to ask it.

" I don't believe in comparisons between two countries any more than I believe in comparisons between two people. Each is responsible to its own ideal," he answered. " If I could choose, I'd be a rich man in England, or a poor man in America, but I have been born a rich man in America."

"I know I shall always be glad I've seen America," I said.

"And I was glad to have seen your country. Americans believe strongly in personal ideals, but they could not be content to be the silent custodians of world-ideals so many lovely characters in Great Britain are. I don't compare, all the same. There's place in the world for our way of it. It doesn't do to forget that it can happen an ideal is withering in its fortress for want of a personal contribution."

"You are a very appreciative person," I said. "I should think it would be quite enlivening to see my own country with you for a guide."

He gave me a little bow, as if my words had pleased him.

"Appreciation is an act of worship," he said.

"I wish there were more worshippers, then, in America," I said. "I should really find it pleasanter if they were not quite so eloquent about our inferiority, beginning with our aristocracy and ending with our hairpins."

"I don't know about hairpins," he said, laughing, "but yours seem to answer their purpose very well, so I shouldn't worry. And aristocracy is the best thing in the world, though we would rather it were the possession of everyone."

"Perhaps it is not needed so much now as it used to be," I granted.

"Why, yes, it is a symbol, and can be adapted to any age. I have a dream of the future aristocracy of America. My sister warned you I was a visionary. Just as in your old days the feudal lord controlled the fighting energy of his people, so I vision that the master minds of finance may direct the industrial energy of the American nation. Tradition and ideal will become associated with it. Economy will become so exact a science that everyone can have those necessities of daily life that will allow him to be free enough to express himself in his surroundings rather than be imprisoned by them."

" Is that socialism ? " I asked doubtfully.

" Why, no, indeed. It's the aristocracy of human responsibility. Socialism is a direct negation of every desire of the human spirit and a parody on human powers."

" There was a fierce necessity backing those old feudal lords," I said.

" There's a glorious aim now," he returned, " and times have advanced."

" You believe in ideals among other things," I said, a little wistfully—for ideals at St Antoine's are all kept in a silence-chamber.

" Would you suggest their presence in our hearts is nothing but a pleasant insincerity on the part of God ? " he asked, laughing at me.

He had an air of taking life and opinions very easily and merrily, and it made it rather difficult to know how far one might seriously accept what he said. Yet rumour told me that he promised to be a " master of finance."

But an American believes that to think a thing is a sufficient reason for saying it, while our countrymen believe it is the best reason for remaining silent, and it is difficult to get used to the opposite point of view.

" You are an experimental nation," I said. " No doubt you will experiment in ideals some day."

" You will perhaps experiment on your own account," he suggested. " Keep your own ideals and learn experiment from America."

" Everyone has a lesson for me," I said. " You are a race of missionaries over here, I think. You forget I am going to be married. That is an old-fashioned, final sort of thing to do, to begin with. What about the tyrannical British husband I hear so much about ? Anthony might take a ' master-in-my-own-house ' mood just as I was in the middle of my most thrilling experiment."

" Not he—if I know anything about you. ' Master in my own house '—that ugly phrase does not belong to any man you have smiled upon."

I didn't feel quite so sure of that myself.

" I'd like to introduce Anthony to you," I said. " I am afraid he has a rather prominent will of his own."

" I have heard it said that I have, but I know I couldn't bear to feel it press upon any human creature. No one could, and believe in God. It is contempt only makes one do it, and contempt is blasphemy."

I suppose anyone could have said that. It would take a priest or an American to believe it.

" Are you going to banish authority ? " I inquired.

"Of course not. But there is the supremacy of the spirit—quite different from the force of the human will."

"Oh, I am learning, learning to-night," I declared, laughing. "Shall I ever be able to accept things and people and ideas at their best in your wholly delightful way? And you do more—you actually make them be their best."

"Well, what better offering could I bring to God?" he said cheerfully. "This is a mighty good supper, is it not?"

"Apropos of worship?"

"Why, yes, and to let our feet touch earth again, in case you grow tired of my flights."

"I can touch earth very solidly in Scotland. I find your flightiness very refreshing."

"You'll always love your own country best, though, and never really love any country but an old one. You are gifted with the cherishing sympathies. It takes the creative sympathies to love a country like ours."

"Has Moira then the creative sympathies?" I asked, with how much or how little purpose I really don't know, "for she is bringing a quite alarming amount of love to your country."

He half turned and glanced at the table where she sat, her pretty elbows on the table (Dana Gibson has brought it into fashion) and her radiant face peeping above the orchids and carnations. She was talking to the whole table, giving and winning admiration royally.

Mr Rayne looked back and smiled at me.

"Can you imagine life without flowers?" he asked.

"I'd rather not," I replied.

"God hasn't asked it of us, but rather that than perpetual days without bright spirits like Miss Moira's. She is a flower to life's garden—or—a star to life's night."

Then suddenly he turned quite grave and added: "Let me be happy in stars and flowers when I can. It is discouraging sometimes being a rich man in America."

At that moment I began to think that if I had never met Anthony I should be more reconciled to Moira's attitude towards the charming Mr Linton, but as I had met Anthony I could only give every matchmaking mother who ever made a plan and saw it fail a most heartfelt and commiserating sympathy.

I said to myself that he was far too unselfish, that Moira could not look below the surface, and her dramatic surroundings were making her shallow, and that Mrs Dare Worthington, if she really had any of this much-vaunted faculty for "pulling things through," would have done something to bring them together in the very promising setting this party offered.

But Mrs Dare Worthington continued to talk to Mr Denbigh at her table, and I continued to talk to Mr Rayne at mine, and Moira went on playing at queenship with other little queens and never as much as glanced his way.

But when it was all over and all good-nights said, I found myself driving home with Aunt Hattie, who was also taking two girls she had chaperoned to the cottage next to "Sea-winds." I knew Mrs Dare Worthington drove in her own brougham, by wooded, devious ways, with Mr Denbigh. And as Moira did not tell me how she came home, or with whom, and she arrived rather later than Mrs Dare and Mr Denbigh, I finished the evening by thinking that our beautiful friend might be worthy of her reputation after all.

XII

DOWN GLOUCESTER WAY

AUTUMN came early at Bar Harbour, making its appearance with a curious unmistakable decision, very different from the way our changing seasons advance and retreat, dancing a sort of quadrille with each other, so that one never knows which will be in possession of the following day. In Bar Harbour, for all the lingering heat and brilliant sun, there was a new sharpness in the air, and all the landscape wore a changed tint. The woods and walks grew lovelier, I think, with sudden scarlet leaves in the fading green, and a perfect glory of golden-red beside the purple stars of the Michaelmas daisies fringing the roadsides.

One by one the cottages began to be deserted, and carriages and carts loaded with luggage were seen more and more often driving towards the quay. They looked rather a blot on the scenery as they went. I always felt that bags and baggage, departing and arriving guests, should not be seen on Bar Harbour white ways. One might as well see the actors hurrying across the stage to dress for their parts. But the stage itself was getting rather blank by the time we were making ready for our departure.

We were to go back to the Wises, who were now at their summer cottage in a part of the world they called "down Gloucester way." Aunt Hattie was going to the Adirondacks to visit some of her old friends, and then she was to follow us, curtailing her usual wanders for the sake of her Scottish nieces. Mrs Dare Worthington had been gone several weeks, and we read an account of her progress from place to place in the daily papers. I was getting a little tired of Bar Harbour's determined gaiety, and should have hailed the prospect of getting to real country, entire freedom and Sue, with unclouded content, had it not been that these things would bring us once more into Mr Linton's charming presence. He seemed to have been visiting the Wises on and off all summer, and Moira had no sort of doubt that one of his visits would coincide with ours.

Mr Rayne left " Sea-winds " only a week before we did. And all the time he had aided and abetted every scheme for the amusing and flattering of Moira, and she had accepted all he could do for her with the most charming gratitude and the most delightful detachment, and had continued to flirt with and be admired by as many American youths as came her way. And he seemed as contented as she was, and was always ready to efface himself quietly whenever his presence might not be appreciated by some momentary adorer.

The afternoon before he left, Moira gave up an engagement, letting Aunt Hattie and me go to a "Musical" without her, and went with him instead upon a pilgrimage to "Duckbrook Walk." He had assured her that no visit to Bar Harbour was complete without having climbed the damp, wooded path that led steeply up the banks of the swift-flowing little "Duckbrook." But when, the next morning, we saw him off by the white steamer there was in both of them a cheerful and conspicuous absence of all regret, to which I could have reconciled myself had there been no fascinating Mr Linton waiting for us at Gloucester. Moira wished him a pleasant journey, and he said, "Hands across the sea," with his own friendly smile, as he stepped upon the gangway, and neither expressed any hope to meet again. I did say we were looking forward to seeing him at St Antoine's some day, and he replied that the pleasure of being welcomed at our home was one of the things that made the future look bright, but American appreciation is so very all-embracing that it was just the thing one expected to hear him say, and Moira sang "Marching through Georgia" softly but exultantly all the way home from the pier.

Moira's delight in herself and her surroundings increased day by day. I reminded her that time was passing and our passages were booked for the end of

October, but even that did not subdue her. She had cheerfully hailed all the new friends, she as cheerfully bade them good-bye, and was quite radiant even on the day of departure from this, the gayest place she had ever been in—indeed the only place she had ever been really gay.

We travelled by day this time, going off endowed with more flowers and books and candy than ever, and we reached Boston late at night.

We went to a small, very secluded hotel to which Aunt Hattie had recommended us, and when we came down the next morning the very first person we saw was Mr Linton, arrived in time to have breakfast with us.

"It didn't seem right that America should lose one moment of your society," he said, greeting us with his grave, graceful earnestness. "I wanted Sue to come right up too, and meet you here, but the plan did not harmonise with her own views. I'm very, very glad to see you once more, Miss Menzies, and I'm very, very glad to see you, Miss Moira."

I had grown far less tongue-tied during my stay in this expressive country, so I found something to say in return. Moira responded with mellifluous eloquence, and I didn't know whether to hope, for the sake of her integrity, that she was sincere or, for the sake of the desires of my own heart, that she wasn't.

"Whatever you've seen at Bar Harbour, you'll see far more real beauty down Gloucester way," continued Mr Linton, "and far more real harmony. Bar Harbour on Mount Desert Island is just like a foreign bird, alighting for a moment on a soil with which it has no real kinship. On Gloucester coast the summer homes possess and civilise the land to some extent, and so do not lose their meaning entirely. It's a place that is very near my heart, and there are some spots I'd like to show you that have a charm I consider second to none in the States."

He continued to expound to us the depth and beauty of all manifestations of life and preach upon the importance of each individual's contribution to it, while we breakfasted off buckwheat cakes and maple syrup, and then we spent a delightful morning in Boston, where we had some shopping to do for ourselves, and Mr Linton had many intricate commissions to " put through " for Mrs Wise and Sue.

It was a beautiful sunny morning, and Boston wore that " sweet and garnished " look common to cities when all their wealthier citizens are away. Certainly they seem to invite little devils that suggest one can now do all kinds of things impossible when all those shrouded windows have watching eyes behind them. Perhaps that helped the exhilarating sense of freedom that seemed to quicken the very air. I began to forget all anxieties and responsibilities and to inwardly echo Moira's often repeated assurance that " Everything was too altogether nice for words."

We made our short railway journey late in the afternoon, and got off the train at a small wayside station, where there was one railway official on the platform, and no other sign of life except a small girl in a checked dress, seated in a strange, one-horse vehicle on the white road.

The strange vehicle had come for us. Mr Linton said it was the only thing to be hired in the neighbourhood. It was the queerest conveyance I ever saw—a medley of boards and whalebone, leather and iron and moth-eaten fringe, set upon four large spindley wheels. The driver in charge looked about eleven, and had a long flaxen pigtail tied with two huge scarlet bows. All our "baggage" had gone on by express, so we had only ourselves and two dressing-cases to stow away among the boards and curtains.

"The Neuk," as this newly built summer home was called, was three miles from the little station. We drove downhill all the way. The long, narrow road wound in and out, finding itself the easiest way among the mounds and stone patches, and from the crest of a hill we sighted the house long before we came to it—a pale grey wooden house lifted high on its stone foundations, gleaming in the dark, rough setting of its rugged surroundings.

The light of a September afternoon shone upon it—that still, intense light of autumn, slanting sunrays, wherein joy and sorrow seem so strangely mingled. The white road made a sudden bend as if on purpose to reach its gate (but of course the gate had been placed there to suit the road) then wriggled away again on a twisting way to the sea.

The wild land all about it was broken by rocks and stretches of white, time-worn stones and boulders, left, it would seem, by retreating waters in primeval days. The rough hills, rising ruggedly on either side, were wooded with gnarled and wind-bent cedar-trees. Beyond the house, at the foot of a precipitous slope, lay a wide and silent marsh, holding blue pools in its expanse of yellow marsh-grass.

If the Newton house was a home for dreams, and Aunt Hattie's cottage a tent for pleasure, this was the hut of experiment and adventure.

As we rattled down the last hill we saw a small and inky figure, perched on the bars of the white gate.

It was Sue—a Sue clad in black from head to foot, with black ribbons in her hair, and the Boston terrier wagging his tail in her arms.

She jumped down and flung the gate open as we made our shaky approach, and held out her hands to Moira and me.

" 'Nother freak, Sue ? " said Mr Linton, looking intimately and inquiringly at her.

" Oh, I felt like it," she answered him over her shoulder, and she clung to me as if she were extraordinarily glad to see me.

" Did you have a good time at Bar Harbour—really the time of your life ? Are you still engaged to Anthony ? Do you love me as much as before ? " she inquired.

" More than ever. I haven't heard that Anthony has jilted me. I had a very good time, but Moira had the time of her life," I replied.

"I should think Moira would. Moira's a star right along. But aren't you glad to be here, Moira ? Mr Linton can help to give you a very good time."

"Indeed I will," said Mr Linton earnestly.

"I'm ever so glad to be here, Sue," said Moira. "No girl at Bar Harbour was as nice as you."

The little red-ribboned girl drove her strange property away, and we went up the sanded path to the house.

There Mr and Mrs Wise and little Montagu were ready for us with a welcome that was like a welcome home. There was a most inspiring assurance of "room for us" in their little circle, while each one seemed to convince us of a separate and particular gladness in our presence and our return.

"I guess you're glad to be back with us," declared Mrs Wise. "I've been saying all day, 'Those two blessed children are travelling towards us with very light hearts.' We're the veriest cranks that you ever saw, but we know how to love you."

"Why, momma, they've been seeing a really smart place," said Sue reproachfully.

"And learnt to love us best, isn't that so ?" returned Mrs Wise, with her big, beautiful eyes shining. "I know about Bar Harbour. You don't need to tell me one thing about Bar Harbour. Hunting your own heart for fun, that's what Bar Harbour is. Don't you love us all better than that ?"

I most certainly did, and I knew I should continue loving them long after Bar Harbour and many other things were entirely forgotten. Faith is necessary to all permanence. Interest flags, love fails without it. People who have none become all too soon bores—dull to themselves and others. And the faith of the " veriest crank " has far more real adventure in it than the keenest chase with one's own poor heart for quarry.

Sue left me hardly a moment to linger downstairs, though there was yet much more than time to dress for their early supper. She hurried me up to a charming little bedroom, all varnished wood and white hangings, with plain white paper on the walls, where she looked about as appropriate as a black beetle would have done, and she began energetically to unpack my things, " to make it seem you're really here," she said.

" Are you really as glad as all that to see me, Sue ? " I asked, " or are you just worried to death about something ? "

" One thing about you, you aren't a fool," she announced, vigorously jerking some of my skirts on to the pegs that awaited them. " But no, I'm not worried one tiny little bit. I don't begin to know what worried is. I'm just living and experimenting and experiencing."

" Living and experimenting and experiencing is quite often seven devils," I said.

" That's all right," she assured me earnestly. " It's blank, unfilled, awful nothingness that I can't endure. It's when I feel that is what's waiting for me round the corner I get bluest. That's why I'm so almighty glad you've come."

"Because I am better than blank, unfilled nothing?"

"It's because you are so dear and sweet," she explained, sitting down on the bed beside me. "I feel if you've happened perhaps other things I want may happen too."

"What do you want, Sue?" I asked her.

"Real things," she declared emphatically, with her eyes gazing very earnestly before her, as if she were trying to see into the infinite stores of the universe. "Real things, that don't need people thinking they're real to make them so. Nothing happening gives me a hollow ache. If there's one thing I can't abide it's a hollow ache. I'd rather be all filled up with devils."

"Is the black dress for a real thing gone, or for a real thing that never happened, or is it a way of thinking something is real that needs thinking to make it so?" I asked.

"No. It's so I might feel harmonious in case something did happen. Perhaps I won't wear it to-morrow."

But she did not change it that evening. I got into a loose kimono and she brushed the dust out of my hair, then she chose the blouse she liked the best for me to wear that evening, left me for a moment to desire Moira to put on her blue Liberty dress, and came back to talk with me till little Montagu came up to summon us to supper.

There were no "public rooms," in the ordinary sense, at "The Neuk." All the ground floor was occupied by a wide, many-windowed hall, into which the stairway ran down from above. There was a huge fireplace wide enough to take logs a yard long, deep window-seats piled with cushions, and several great screens by which it could be made into two or three rooms. The furniture looked rather sketchy and unpremeditated, but one always found there exactly what one wanted for use and for comfort. A dining-room was improvised by screening off the end nearest the kitchen, which was built out and reached by a short passage. The whole house had been planned to bring the maximum of comfort with the minimum of work.

Montagu had had to find and summon everyone to supper, including a youth of nineteen, named Louis P. Walham, who had cycled over from somewhere in the morning and who had apparently no intention of ever cycling back there. I understood he had been paying Sue much attention in the earlier part of the day, but on the appearance of Moira and the Liberty dress he had evidently undergone an entire change of heart.

"Now you can tell us what you did at Bar Harbour," said Uncle Harry, as we took our places at the lamplit table which was aflame with scarlet maple leaves laid down in intricate patterns.

"Mrs Wise knows the sort of thing we did at Bar Harbour," I said, laughing.

“I guess Moira may have seen something different at Bar Harbour,” suggested Mrs Wise.

“We both had a very good time,” said Moira, “but I think we’re going to have an even better time here.”

“I’d like very well to spend my summers at Bar Harbour, if I were a millionaire,” said Mr Wise, “or at Newport.”

“Sure,” said Louis P. Walham.

Mrs Wise looked disdainfully at both.

“What did you do most of the time at Bar Harbour?” Montagu asked curiously.

“Most of the time we discussed the rival merits of the two countries,” I replied.

“I bet you they said some real tactless things about England,” said Montagu. “I always liked the English after I read about King Arthur and all those knights. But when there was that Boer War I was the only boy in the whole school wanted the English to win.”

“What’s the good of war and discussing anyway, when all the world is so beautiful?” demanded Mrs Wise. “Find your own soul and emerge, and then everything everywhere will belong to you.”

“An American never doubts his soul,” I said, pondering over the young man who habitually proposed to heiresses and interpreted poetry so discerningly.

“An American never doubts one single bit of himself,” said Mr Wise.

“ I wish America had knights and a Round Table,” said little Montagu. “ Pilgrim Fathers make me tired, and then there’s only Red Indians.”

“ Mr Rayne says American ideals will be symbolised some day,” I said.

“ Why, I hope not,” said Mr Linton. “ Americans want nothing but untrammelled freedom of thought.”

“ Americans have got the symbol of themselves right now,” declared Mrs Wise, “ if they’d only look at their own tall buildings that can’t be matched in any other country of the world. They make a working symbol that won’t trammel anyone’s thought. What do you see first thing when you sail into New York Harbour ? The statue of Liberty ? Not one bit. Half-a-glance at that little thing, just because it’s got talked about. What you see is that mighty, marvellous skyline, that’s like nothing else that ever was or will be. And those tall buildings just call out, ‘ Man’s thought has done this.’ Mighty quick too. No tired patience or evolution or waiting for the next generation to come up and help. All done by thinking. And it just makes you feel how wonderful you are. But there are some people so unprogressive they can’t see it. We came over on the same steamer once with an artist—English he was, but he’d lived in Paris and wore his hair long. And that man just took one look and hollered out, ‘*The World’s Nightmare !*’ and went right down below and stayed until the ship was docked——”

Mrs Wise began to laugh, and when Mrs Wise laughed everyone else laughed too.

" That poor man, I felt for him," she went on ; " but it's a most inspiring sight if you've got any initiative in your make-up. It's just the symbol of America where there's nothing to prevent a man doing anything he's got a mind to."

" They bring us up to believe that doing almost anything we've got a mind to is the broad road to destruction," I said.

" That's because you've got nervous, living alongside so much lovely tradition. You get feeling that the tradition is all that matters," said Mrs Wise. " Now, heaven's taking care of the beautiful, spiritual reality that is symbolised in your traditions, and it is earth's business to look after man and see he gets what his progress requires here. And heaven's really right here all the time, if you'll only keep on thinking about it."

When Mrs Wise talked I fancy even her family assigned to her the gift of exaggeration, but there were times when I began to wonder if exaggeration were not, after all, the correct method of expressing truth. One finds so many people who, face to face with a fact or an idea, will at once try to limit it, as if to make it better fit their own receptive capacity. " She is not as sad as she thinks she is," they say of one who sorrows. " Those marvels exist only in his own mind," they say of the idealist. " Miracles don't happen " is their pronounce-ment on the memories of the saints. It is strange that one person in his tiny life should deny the possibilities of a greater life beyond him—stranger still to think of the finite limiting the power of the infinite.

" Everything's all right anyway," continued Mrs Wise, " and if anyone's got a lean to one side, on Judgment Day he'll meet someone leaning to the other side, and the spirit of American commercialism will be there, and they'll do a deal and get things square before the rolls are called."

" It seems to me," said Mr Linton, " that Miss Elspeth, although she will never wholly accept the American spirit, can never now see things quite as she saw them before."

" No one ever could see things just as they saw them before after being in America," said Mrs Wise.

" Too bad you came," said Mr Wise.

" I guess Scotland's all right," said Louis P. Walham, in a voice that suggested he was ready to defend his conviction to any extent, and although I could not but know where he found his inspiration, I felt towards him the irresistible gratitude one must always feel to the friendly foreigner praising one's own country.

" I wonder if Anthony will look just as attractive as he did when you see him again," remarked Sue.

" I may feel inclined to suggest to him that some of his ideas are a little out of date," I said.

" Couldn't you marry an American and stay on this side ? " she inquired persuasively.

"Would not Anthony then think I'd treated him very badly?" I said, laughing.

"Why, you've done very well by Anthony," pronounced Sue. "He's had all your lovely thoughts and sympathy all this time."

"Falling in love is an extension of consciousness anyway, so anyone who has helped him to it has done him a good turn," said Mrs Wise happily. "Wouldn't you like to marry an American, Elspeth?"

"Very much indeed," I said, "but there's that dreadful Scotch faithfulness that makes me think I'd like even better to marry Anthony. And nice as Americans are, it seems to me that on our side men do much more for their wives."

"An American allows her to do more for herself," put in Moira.

"I daresay that's so," said Uncle Harry, "but there's more fancy waiting on in your country. That's what makes so many of our girls marry into your aristocracy."

"You must never forget," said Mr Linton, "that when you speak of ideals and customs your thoughts are with one limited class. Our social life knows its own exclusions but our ideals are the property of all. The wife of the wage-earner in America has exactly the same reverence and dignity accorded her as the wife of the millionaire."

"Isn't it nice you've come over here and we can learn so much from each other?" said Mrs Wise, her eyes aglow with love for us all.

"Don't think you have seen the whole of America," Mr Linton went on with his persuasive earnestness. "You have not seen the whole of our great country till you have looked into the soul of each man and woman that belongs to it."

I had seen so many contradictions that I was quite prepared to believe him, and yet there are always the great tendencies.

Most people conceal, more or less successfully, a secret belief in the superiority of their own attitude towards life, and it may very well be the same with countries. Yet in spite of all the jars I used sometimes to wonder if the American point of view did not come nearest to that which has always been in the world as the priest's. To him all things run back to the sanctity and preciousness of the individual—nothing matters in comparison with the fate of each separate, single character. And yet, with that acknowledgment must come a marvelling at the way in which an idea can exist and continue contradicted by a million facts of habit and custom. Life is held cheap, hideously cheap, in all American plans, but the strange, uplifted ideal, to which the country long ago was dedicated, still lives and is unclouded.

Mrs Wise had a way of saying "The eternal ideal is truer than the finite fact," when she heard of some of her transcendental friends acting in a way that did not match the sentiments they were wont to express, so perhaps that is yet another proof of it.

After supper we moved round the screens and gathered about the huge fireplace, where, though the night was only very slightly cool, they set a light to the piled-up cedar branches and logs and soon had a blazing, scented fire sending its glow through the room. I think it was lit for artistic reasons, and certainly the perfume of burning cedar is like incense, and with the single lamp and the four candles on the mantelshelf the house seemed endowed with the very poetry of a hut to inhabit in the evening after a day of adventure.

But all the time there seemed to be shadows somewhere and somehow—quite invisible, but not at all ineffective.

Mrs Wise lay on a linen-covered couch with a gay rug over her feet, and lulled herself into a dreamy half sleep. Little Montagu sat on a large chair absorbed in a book. Uncle Harry strolled up and down the piazza outside, smoking the pipe his wife disliked so much.

Moira was enthroned in the deep ingle-neuk seat, with many bright cushions piled behind her—all in a glow of firelight, her soft blue dress with its snowy crepe sleeves taking the most graceful folds about her, her hair done in the most becoming elaborateness she could attain, and a vivid red rose on a long green stalk in her hands. Sue said she looked " effectively inappropriate." I misdoubted me she was inappropriately effective. Louis P. Walham, with his arms hugging his knees, occupied a cushion at her feet, and seemed prepared to spend his evening staring at her. Mr Linton had drawn his chair as close to the enclosing ingle-neuk as he could, and bent over her with charming deference.

Of course in America it is taken for granted that every woman should assume queenship, and wear her crown joyfully and openly, but in our own country (though she is, I claim, no less a reigning sovereign) her robes and regalia are only for dim, sacred, never-told and never-forgotten hours, which may perhaps be sorrow's hours, but are always majestic ones, and I did not like Moira to vaunt her newly acquired queenship at just that moment and in just that way.

Sue was curled up in a basket-chair outside the glowing circle of the firelight, looking very small and very black, and contributing very little to the conversation.

When Mrs Wise went frankly to sleep Moira assumed the air of being the most important person present. She did it very prettily, with dreamy, innocent eyes seeking homage as if unconsciously, but I knew her well enough to be aware that she was, as Sue would describe it, "playing her sweet, girlish notes for all they were worth."

Sue had certainly done all she could towards the inappropriate effectiveness. She it was who had established Moira in the picturesque setting of the polished wooden ingle-neuk, and chosen the most becoming cushions to place about her. It was she too who had contributed the vivid red rose.

But I did not like it, and soon I got up and walked out on to the piazza, and there I found Uncle Harry rocking himself vigorously in one of the wooden rocking-chairs and enjoying a large cigar—which his wife would have condemned even more than his pipe.

I heard Sue slip away too, soon after me. I thought she would come to the piazza, but she did not, and in a moment we heard from her again. She was at the piano, playing slow music, evidently as an accompaniment to the moods of those in the fire-circle.

The music went on for some time—changing airs of sentiment and pathos, some of them culled from the classics and some from the latest musical comedies—and then it stopped suddenly and there was silence. I went to find her, but when I got round the screen to the piano she had vanished.

Then, when I came out again, I saw her seated alone on the piazza steps, elbow on knee, gazing out into the night, where the dark skyline of the rugged hills was hardly darker than the dimly starred heavens above.

"Doesn't it seem sometimes," she said slowly and sadly, "as if God were responsible for us all? He makes the temptations and He gives us the weakness that makes us fall into them. If He hadn't been able to think of the awful things they never could have happened. It seems to me as if everything were God's fault."

I came down the steps beside her and looked out into the darkness too.

"I can't see why God made the world like He did make it. I can't see how He could. It doesn't seem as if anybody could do it."

There were tears in her voice. I think the little handkerchief crushed in her hand was wet with them. I said nothing. What was there to say ? What is there ever to say in the face of such a mood ?—and nothing to do but wait with patience until we find strength to strike a little spark and set our tiny rushlights burning once again while we wait for the fleeing of the shadows and the first rays of the eternal dawn.

In the meantime I suggested that we should all go to bed—especially Moira.

It was far too late and dark for Louis P. Walham to set out on his homeward way, so a corner of the hall and a sofa were screened off for his occupation.

XIII

THE SHRINE OF MEMORIES

THERE was one place I felt I had to see before we left New England, and that was Concord. The desire came to me entirely from the force of suggestion, because I had only very vaguely heard of Concord when we left Scotland and no one explained it very lucidly when we got to America, but very soon it began to loom in my mind as a region singularly significant—a centre of great importance in the " make-up " of the wonderful country.

Mr Linton always got more grave and earnest than ever when he spoke of it, and Mrs Wise met all allusions to it with an even brighter light than usual in her rapt, shining eyes. She seemed to regard it as a sort of Mecca, the birthplace of the transcendental faith that set her in so happy an attitude towards life.

I had read Emerson's essays, of course, before I came to America, and found, as most people do, that they induced for the rest of the day a serene and hopeful mood, but that from them could spring the many and varied mental cultures so fervently and efficiently practised by Bostonians had never occurred to me—perhaps because Scotland does not present to new growths the favourable soil that America does.

"I suppose Concord is too far off to think of now?" I said to Sue, after we had been at The Neuk a fortnight.

"Why, no," she replied. "We can go in to Boston quite early, and then go on. It isn't more than about twenty miles from Boston. I guess we'll see what Mr Linton thinks about it."

Mr Linton thought it beautiful of me to want to go. It rather surprised me to hear him say it so earnestly, and I wondered if he still regarded me as disappointingly unappreciative of the more optimistic views of life. But then, evidently seeing I had forgotten or did not know, he explained that Concord was dedicated to other memories besides those of Emerson and Thoreau, and suggested that if the spirit of imperialism was still strong in me I might find them a little sad.

But I still wanted to go, and he thought that more beautiful than ever, and said Sue had some charming friends he was sure I would like to know, and who would find a joy in knowing me, and it would be very harmonious if I saw them and their home the same day.

I gathered that this was meant to still further soften the sadness of Concord's memories for a British pilgrim, so I thanked him, and Sue planned it, as she planned everything, according to Mr Linton's ready and sympathetic advice.

Moira said she had no interest in Emerson, and still less in the war, and Mr Linton's genius for appreciation seemed able to find this point of view even more beautiful than my eagerness, for he immediately suggested a counter-attraction to occupy her during our absence, and to be personally conducted by himself.

So on the morning of the day fixed by the aforesaid friends of Sue, she and I set out alone.

" I can't ever be too thankful Moira came to America and met Mr Linton," she remarked thoughtfully, as we waved them our farewells.

There was no use trying to understand the bent of Sue's thoughts by her occasional remarks, and I had given up doing it, but this made me frown.

" That sounds as if you thought it had some special significance," I said.

" Why, it would be too bad if you came all this way and nothing resulted from it," she returned. " Don't you like dramatic conclusions ? "

" They are quite interesting, but they are not the end of life," I said.

" That is the pity," said Sue, and she sighed.

Then she inquired if the hat and dress she wore were the most suitable and effective she could have chosen for the day, and absorbed herself in all the dramatic points the expedition offered.

We got to Boston before midday, crossed the town to a different station, and started for Concord.

We travelled through scenery that everywhere seems characteristic of Massachusetts, the gentle rise and fall of wooded ground, the ghostly birches among the crowded trees, the low-lying water. It was a grey, sunless day, very mild, with the damp of recent rain in the air. The tangled woods were very still; the quiet sadness of autumn was beginning to creep over the land. The rains had been very heavy, and some of the little ponds had risen to flood the fields and penetrate the woods, so that here and there we looked out at that sight which is always so infinitely pathetic—trees with base hidden, rising straight out of a waste of encroaching waters. There are few things that so suggest desolation and loneliness, perhaps a memory of the ancient desolation of the Flood, when all the miracle and beauty of renewing, recreating life was hidden and withdrawn.

But, as if to console me for this sad aspect, it was on that day I first saw the maple-trees in all their autumn glory, and certainly nothing that has ever been said to the praise of these fires of American woods could ever do their wonder more than justice.

We saw them directly we got off the train at the little station—across a stretch of marshy, uneven grass that lay between the road and the woods.

The farther trees, high and magnificent, each distinguishable from the other in spite of the close confusion of their interwoven branches, were of a soft, velvety green, black in the shadows; and in the foreground, among saplings of a paler tint, glowed the fiery orange-red of the maples—glowed indeed, like paper trees invisibly illuminated. I could have thought each separate leaf had a tiny light behind it. It was a daylight illumination—the poetry of firework—in the sunless grey air, in these damp, marshy places, burning perpetually with their own matchless flames.

No wonder Americans are more alert, more vividly minded than we are, their impressions are so much more sudden and arresting and varied. They are kept in a continual state of responsiveness, while our mist-laden atmosphere hangs like a veil between us and the outer world; so Americans invent new inspirations and contrive artificial impressions to incite themselves to continuous and feverish response, and we plan restraints and impose denials and teach all our faculties and impulses to become very cautious.

A waggonette had been sent to await our arrival at the station, in charge of an old and grey-haired negro, who looked the incarnation of traditional respectability.

He had touched his hat in English fashion without offering the usual American comment when Sue had asked him to kindly wait while her Scotch friend admired the maple-trees. He was the first American servant who gave me the impression of admiring himself in his position. All the others admired themselves heartily too, I am sure, but in spite of it.

We had a long drive along a wet, grey road that was always without the hedgerows and ditches of British roads, passing through fields and varied woods till we took a sudden turn in at a grey-stone gateway, and the horses' hoofs clung to the crackling gravel of a steep way leading to a house.

And as we did so, we passed right into the atmosphere of the past—the indescribable influence that at once impresses and emanates from things that belong to bygone time. The untouched, waiting, receptive look was to be seen nowhere within these precincts, and now one no longer looked for possibilities in oneself but turned to see what heritage the old years had stored up for the endowment of those who were to come after.

The house of mellowed grey wood stood high, with parkland falling gently about it, and old trees and long-planted shrubs breaking the smooth stretches of velvety turf that plainly had had the watchful care of a century to bring it to this perfection. It was one of the earliest of New England's colonial houses, built to suit the new country, but also to match the old. It was not an imitation, of which there are so many in America. It was a memory, of which there are so few.

The Dennistouns were a large family, and they were all there to meet us and greet us when we arrived.

Sue evidently thought them worthy of an extremely reserved and quiet deportment, and I felt she was assuming all the dignity of her own colonial ancestors, of whom she could claim a long line on her father's side.

Directly we went in and were welcomed and led into a library, where a fire burned in an open grate, and where there were slippery leather chairs and many books and small-paned windows, I felt as if I were actually back in Britain, with once more about me the gentle calm of the satisfied life that rests so contentedly on its long-laid foundations, and, for all its activity, is never restless.

"We are so glad to see you," they said to me, and they fired no questions at all at me. They did not ask me how I liked America, or show any curiosity concerning Scotland. Probably there was nothing at all I could have told them. They had travelled a great deal, and knew my country as well as Mrs Dare Worthington did, though wearing their knowledge with so great a difference.

Nor did they tell me I was "altogether lovely," but I felt myself enfolded into a kindliness of spirit that had nothing to do with the immediate effect of my arrival on the moods of those I met. It made me feel, as I might often before have felt in my own country, only American self-consciousness had not then trained my perceptions, that hospitality is one of the ancient realities that have their roots in the very beginnings of human nature and their blossom in the region of the spirit.

Whatever new ideals came into this house from the new country wherein it found itself, they would be held with the same sweet fervour and faithfulness as the old. And here would be always, for those who sought it, the gift of an endowing strength and safety that can never come from those who have no love for the past. For things valued first because they are new and stimulating are easily parted with for things yet newer, more untried.

Most Americans are quick to appreciate psychological states, and Miss Dennistoun, I think, must have divined mine.

"Does it seem homelike to you?" she said, as if the idea pleased her, and she asked if I should like to be shown all the house.

It was exactly what I had been longing for, and she took me into a long, pale-tinted drawing-room, with old-fashioned chairs in loose covers of flowered chintz, and large windows looking out on a sloping lawn that disappeared into a wood of pines and ghostly birches—then up a red-carpeted staircase to a wide passage with windows at both ends, where old prints of hunting scenes hung on the walls and a big grandfather clock ticked solemnly. We went into bedroom after bedroom, all furnished in old colonial mahogany, with canopied beds and massive mirrors and engravings of a hundred years ago, framed in heavy wood frames.

"There is a haunted room too," said Miss Dennistoun, and she took me into an octangular boudoir, where the air was heavy as if with an ominous presence and one felt afraid of entering for fear of knocking up against something one couldn't see.

"A sad-hearted lady threw herself out of that window once," Miss Dennistoun recounted, "and no one knows why, but on moonless nights she is sometimes seen at the window and sometimes wandering about the lawn. Do you believe in ghosts ? "

" Of course," I said. " I always did. What else could make you feel you have got to think certain thoughts in certain places, while others seem to set you free to think any you like ? "

" Miss Menzies believes in ghosts. Is not that delightful ? " she said, when we went down again to lunch in a dining-room that had long, long ago been a kitchen and had that look of homely comfort common to such rooms.

" Is that to my credit ? " I asked, and they all at once said it was.

" We all like to burrow in hidden histories," Mr Dennistoun explained, and they told me much past history about this old house, and I had quite forgotten that I had come to see anything else when the tuff-tuff of a motor car outside reminded me Concord was yet to be visited.

When we started out the afternoon was as sunless as the morning had been, but the grey, damp air brought to the day the nearest approach to " atmosphere " that New England can wear.

We went very quickly through the changing scenery on the way—sad, barren uplands, marshy hollows and endless woods, where more maple-trees burned in the thinning green and the russet red of the fallen leaves of many past autumns made a heavy carpet below the boughs. Then we came to a narrow road between tall trees, revealing the pale gleam of the sky behind them on one side and a more living gleam of the same tint from Walden's pool on the other. And when we had passed the trees they pointed out Thoreau's hut on the wooded slope beyond the water. Then a wide vista was opened out to us, and as we sped down a sloping road to Concord I saw the low-lying grey house that once upon a time was the home of Emerson.

Now I was actually in the regions to which Mr Linton paid the tribute of so much reverence.

It was just a plain, severe, grey wooden house, with uncompromisingly stiff windows, and ground which I suppose they called a garden round about it.

Usually when we make a pilgrimage to a place wholly for the sake of some personality once enshrined there, we meet disappointment and a sense of unreality, as if the connecting link were broken, and we leave it feeling that any other place would have done as well; if we had been deceived we should never have found it out. But here, possibly because Thoreau and Emerson both wove their thoughts in such close union with their experience and observation, the spirit of the place rises to confirm all that imagination has given us already. The thoughts invoked by all the goblin woods and lonely waters are the inevitable thoughts so intimately given to us by Thoreau in his nature studies. And the aspect of this grey wooden house, and of its wide, monotonous surroundings, with their sad, yet homelike charm, their severe yet unrepellIng austerity, is curiously in harmony with that kindly, austere face which we know as Emerson's.

He was never teased by romantic whispers nor dazzled by symbology here. The " partial interests of to-day and yesterday " passed noiselessly by on the oiled wheels of New England routine. The " rose of joy, the immortal hilarity " of mental activity was shepherded by New England self-control, and met here no temptation to wander down alluring byways of beauty and enchantment. " Men descend to meet," he wrote, probably after being disturbed in his hilarity by somebody else's partial interests. Many of us, I think, get upon stilts, and, from the essay wherein he tells us he would speed a guest when the poise and stimulation of novelty begin to wear out, it would seem he preferred them upon stilts.

" You are extremely thoughtful," said young Mr Dennistoun, who was beside me, driving the car.

I was so accustomed by that time to hearing none but complimentary utterances that I took it for granted he was praising my appreciation, but Sue thought I was accused of dullness, and hastened to defend me.

" Miss Menzies is engaged," I heard her tell Miss Dennistoun, " and as she can't be pretty and bright for him just now she has to keep thinking so as to make her letters interesting."

(Sue had absolutely no authority from me for this theory of hers.)

" We must try and show you everything you would like to see," said Mr Dennistoun, smiling at me. It was impossible not to notice that he (like his coachman) refrained from the invariable personal comment and question, though I felt he had the most understanding sympathy with those far-reaching letters. It was he and his sister who showed me how exquisitely possible it is to have the fine perceptions of the New Country, with the reverence and silence of the Old.

"This is Louisa Alcott's house," he said, a few minutes later, as he drew up the car before a little, sad, deserted brown house with pine-topped hillocks rising beside it, and a shabby board before it announcing that it was ready to become the property of anyone who would pay for it, and I felt a sudden, far more intimate interest kindle in me.

I had not expected this, and it brought me my nearest tie with Concord. I looked up at it with many little emotions returning to me. For surely this is the very little brown house she gave as home to Meg and Beth and Amy and dear Jo, and is there a girl who has not loved them all wherever the book has gone ? If the impress of personality is the test of the depth of friendship, they were far more my friends than were many living people who shared my days. In the spirit I had been here often. But Laurie's home, if not Laurie himself, must have been added from the region of dreams to brighten a rather dreary reality, for no handsome house stands over the way from this little brown house—only the pines and the little hills.

They kept the car there for me a long time (perhaps sympathetically allowing me to gather inspiration for my letters), and I left it with a real regret. It was curiously delightful to come face to face with a memory of my own childhood, here in this new country.

Concord itself has all the characteristics of most of those little towns that are scattered among the tangled woods and fields that make up Massachusetts—a wide, twisting road, wooden houses irregularly placed on unkempt grass, here and there a fenced garden, here and there an untidy yard of tools and timber, a large triangular green dividing the road, churches standing on prominent eminences, and the rails and trolleys and moaning cars of the electric tramway, but in Concord is here and there an old house from colonial days, with the unmistakable stamp of Time's mellowing touch, such as the little inn beyond the green and the yellow house before which our car again drew up that I might see the bullet, carefully enclosed in protecting glass, still embedded in the yellow wood.

Of all this I had little more than a hasty, impressionist view, for a motor car goes very quickly and few of our pauses were long.

But when we came to the shadowy avenue of lofty pine-trees that leads up to North Bridge and the Battleground, we slowed down and went on our westward way as reverently as might be.

The first sun gleam of that day had just pierced the mists, and the pale, slanting rays fell glowing on the beautiful statue of the Minute Man.

"Now you can read for yourself about the shot heard round the world," said Mr Dennistoun.

And then they were all very amazed that I had never "heard tell" of it.

"Perhaps it is not worth while getting out to read it," suggested Miss Dennistoun.

But of course I got out.

> "By the rude bridge which spanned the flood
> Their flag to April's breeze unfurled.
> Here once the embattled farmers stood
> And fired the shot heard round the world."

I suppose to Americans that is just the simple statement of a fact, but my thoughts went back to the old churches of the home country, whose grey walls, every one of them, bear many tablets and brasses to the cherished memory of officers and men who "died at their post," or "fell doing their duty," or perhaps only "lost their lives during the campaign of" some well-known date—commending in simple fashion the beloved dead to our memory, while their deeds are for the record of result, and I could not help again liking our way better than this loud cry upon a world to listen.

Not far away from the handsome Minute Man, between two tall sentinel pines wherein the wind must sing many a dirge, is a stone inscribed, "Grave of the British Soldiers."

"A poor sort of grave to give them," said Mr Dennistoun. He was so like an Englishman that it was very difficult to remember he was not one. He spoke regretfully, as if he wished he could show me a more brave show of hospitality towards my dead countrymen, and I am sure he believed I was only anxious to be polite about it when I said I liked it. But I did. There was all that was simple and soldierly in the upright pines keeping there their perpetual vigil, and in the nameless stone all that was faithful in the record of an unforgetting God.

But I looked at the sun-caught Minute Man very long too, and at the surrounding country, for our blood fought on both sides in that sad war, and the courage and devotion are no less for a difference of taste in the manner of record. Surely the war that began there is one of the most pathetic, as well as one of the most inevitable, in history, and surely it is one of the strangest of its results that all the resentment should remain on the winning side.

And all the time we were there I felt that the motor car was ready to turn and whisk me away at once if these dear American people should feel for a moment that I didn't like it.

When at last I was ready to come away the motor car backed carefully down the pine-shadowed lane and brought us out into the road again.

Miss Dennistoun wanted to show me "Sleepy Hollow," and I should like to have seen the graveyard that had got itself named so comfortable and confiding a name, but noisy automobiles were forbidden to pass by that quiet way, and as there were no more sights we turned and made again for the old house.

There we had an English tea by the fireside in the library that seemed full of the shadows of time as well as the shadows of darkening afternoon, and then the car carried us off to the station, where we got our train for Boston.

I felt as if I had been right away from the new, strange country I had been living in ever since we landed. I had been once again enfolded, commanded, endowed, and it revealed to me anew the great, great difference between the old, supporting, influential life of inheritance and the passionate, lonely, experimental individualism that has sprung up so compellingly all over America.

From which roots will the permanent America grow up ? For, powerful as are the new things, the old, discarded ones remain the favourite boast. Connection with them is the proudest feather in the American's cap—whether in mere sentimental adornment or in obedience to an eternal law it seems impossible to guess.

I explained these ideas to Sue as we travelled down to The Neuk, and tried to get her opinion, as a critical inhabitant, upon them. Sue was pleased to be always interested in everything I said, but all she could find to contribute to these points was that it made her feel her soul all tired of eternity to think how big life was, and how important all you did and thought, and wasn't it a good thing each soul was shut up in a body to prevent it knowing too much all at once ?

Sue always quite decidedly preferred to " make up the tale herself."

She had been unusually silent, even abstracted, during the day. I would have thought her bored, but Sue was never bored when there was a part to play, and she had been quite pleased with herself as a factor in this day's outing. I could only conclude that deep in the innermost recesses of her " inner consciousness " she was filling an even more engrossing rôle.

It was dark when we got back to The Neuk, and I went up to bed soon after supper, for the long day had tired me.

The group by the cedar fire must have been very small that night, for I heard Uncle Harry and Mr Linton pacing up and down the length of the piazza together, and a low murmuring of voices went on persistently from Moira's room next door, where Sue seemed to be spending her evening.

XIV

THE DOMINION OF LOVE

THE next day all the rain-mists had vanished. When I woke and looked out I saw everywhere the still, wonderful sunshine of a true Indian summer day. The chant of the grasshoppers rose loud upon the air, long, cool shadows lay upon the grass, in the marsh the blue sea-pools gleamed like sapphires.

I got up later than anyone else, for Aunt Hattie, in consideration for the fatigues of the day before, had "fixed me a little tray," and brought it to my bedside. Aunt Hattie had not let us remain long at The Neuk without her. She had shortened her visit and followed us after ten days. Certainly she had kept her promise of "loving us to death."

"You can get up and enjoy the sunshine, or lie still and commune with your own spirit, just as you've a mind to," she said. "I don't know what those young ones are up to below. Sue's nowhere to be seen. Moira's watching the landscape with the persistency of the recording angel, but I seem to be aware of considerable stir in the vibratory atmosphere."

It seemed to me there always was stir in the vibratory atmosphere of America, and especially in the immediate neighbourhood of Sue, so I didn't feel particularly anticipatory.

I breakfasted in lazy leisure, hearing below me the voices of those who had risen to the privilege of seven-o'clock breakfast on a golden autumn morning, and quite content not to join them myself for another hour.

But before I was dressed all sounds had died away, and there was silence all through the house. When I came on to the piazza there was no one to be seen.

I went down the steps and out into the freshness of the air, into the glory of the sunshine, my heart going out in joyous response to the sheer, marvellous youth and joy of it.

Was it the young land, or was it the exhilaration of the Western air, or was it the subtle influence of Mrs Wise's particular "mental culture"? All the possibilities, all the plans and promises and hopes of the future seemed to vibrate around me. Birth and life and death, earth and life beyond the earth seemed all mine at once, and all the most splendid possession in the intoxication of that abiding freedom which is the inspiration of America.

I felt as if anything and everything might happen, but even if nothing ever happened again, life itself was so good it did not matter at all.

I had some thoughts of writing to Anthony, and my writing-pad was in my hand, so I wandered out to the seclusion and comfort of my favourite outdoor seat.

This was a flat rock with a curving back, above the steep and wooded slope that fell away from the ground that was the drying-green and garden, stopping once to form a little shelf on which an apple-orchard had been planted, then going precipitously down to the marsh below.

Here one could look right over the marsh to the slender, tree-topped promontory that bounded it on the opposite side, and feel about one the great sweep of the wide sunlit land, the very place for long, long thoughts.

But that morning, though the thoughts began by being very long, they very soon grew shorter, and seemed inclined to come back often to my own present and immediate surroundings. Perhaps the stir in the vibratory atmosphere reached me. American households are apt to be interesting, and I was finding myself more and more inclined to share the prevailing American concentration on what is going to happen next.

"I must go and find everybody, and discover what they are all thinking and feeling," I said to myself. "That will be much more real than sitting here weaving impossible plans, none of which will survive the quiet air of Scotland."

But just then Moira appeared, hurrying across the drying-green towards me. Hurrying she certainly was, but Moira had given up running since she was at Bar

Harbour. She had attained the art of remembering to be graceful, even at the most absorbing moments. And now, in a pale blue linen dress, with the sun making an aureole of her bright hair, she certainly succeeded. I wondered if St Antoine's would recognise this happy, self-possessed and high-spirited Moira.

"I've been looking for you everywhere," she said, sinking down on the rock beside me, a little breathlessly, but not with haste, rather, I think, with the vibratory stir. "I've such a piece of news. Sue and Mr Linton are engaged."

"What ?" I ejaculated, sitting bolt upright rather suddenly.

And then there immediately came to me the conviction that if I had had any sense at all I should have known it all along.

"Isn't it too exciting and interesting and splendid ?" said Moira ecstatically.

"When did it happen ?" I asked, myself a little breathless now.

"Very early in the morning," answered Moira. "They had breakfast out of a tea-basket, right up the hill in the glorious dawn renewed of the day."

The suddenness of the announcement and the conflicting thoughts in my own mind can be the only excuse for an entire loss of tact and a question that might very easily have been unpardonable.

"And are you pleased ?"

"I never was so happy in all my life," declared Moira, drawing a deep, deep breath as if she could never take in enough of life and its joys.

"You see I've been helping Sue," she went on, "and it's been so *wearing*."

It had been nothing of the kind. Whatever Moira had been doing, she had been enjoying it immensely.

"They do seem to have gone about getting engaged in a strangely indirect fashion," I said.

"You see it was this way," said Moira, with a fine air of being willing to enlighten my hopeless ignorance. "Mr Linton's extremely sensitive to charm, and it's his duty to follow the bent of his mind and to respond to all the charm that comes into his sphere and give it out again a thousandfold in his personality and his thoughts and his work. So he simply has to respond to every vibration that comes his way if it is sent to him by anyone that has charm—me, you, Sue, Mrs Wise, everyone. And then he can go forth and combat the sordid and the dreary and help the prisoners of unfaith. It's not flirting; he never flirts. It's really his religion. He says there's a special revelation in every human companionship God puts into his life. He would rob himself of something if he didn't reverence it. Sometimes it's not people at all, but music, or a forest, or a moonlight night. But it made Sue feel not sure. Sue hasn't any use for anything but a weather-proof reality. So I promised to help and discern and tell her. Of course he loved me. Americans do seem to love me, I don't know why, because people didn't love me, not specially, in Scotland, or they never said so, which has the same effect on me. But of course, too, he was just seeing and believing in everything good and sweet God has put into me, to give it out again and go ahead and glorify with. He always starts out from Sue, and always comes back to her. It's all so beautiful, and Sue's so wise and broad-minded, and not a bit narrow and selfish. And she and I talked it all out last night and she felt quite sure. So she invited him to a tea-basket breakfast on the hill, and they are engaged."

I looked back over the past and saw all kinds of bright revealing points in it, as we do when a sudden search-light has been put into our hands to throw upon its darkness and show us what has been.

I had also the humiliation of realising how unwise and narrow-minded and selfish and insular I was, for I felt very decidedly that I'd every bit as soon Anthony embraced the principles of Mormonism at once as become a convert to this kind of religion.

But Sue and Mr Linton harmonised in an inexplicable fashion. One could not but acknowledge it, even if one did not quite understand, and I found myself quite willing to take Moira's word that they were finding it "beautiful."

I was tremendously excited, and would have flown to find Sue at once had there not been another, and rather engrossing, view of the situation pressing its claims.

I looked at Moira. There was no doubt at all, whatever appearances may have suggested before, that the event of the morning had cast no sort of shadow upon her.

" You will find St Antoine's rather dull after all the important psychological adventures you've been taking part in here," I said.

" I'd perish right away with dullness," said Moira cheerfully. " It's simply not in me to adapt myself to St Antoine's again. I'm an individual soul, with an individual's right to expansion, but Uncle Alexander could never be brought to see it."

" But, to use Sue's expression, what are you going to do about it ? " I inquired.

" I am going to marry Mr Rayne," said Moira coolly.

And in the silence that followed she smiled across the marsh with a look in her eyes that suggested that all the joy and gladness and merriment in the world had got together in one spot and were being reflected in their blue depths.

" Moira, Moira, Moira," I said, and the tears, in spite of my efforts, got into my eyes and my voice. How can one ever hear of the engagement of anyone near and dear and young without feeling tearful ? It is like giving something that is precious and all one's own to the great, incomprehensible forces of an untiring universe, whose purpose is endless and whose ways are hidden.

" You blessed sister of mine, you know you're just tickled to death," said my Americanised little Moira, throwing herself into my arms with such an abandonment of merriment and joy that I wonder she did not tip us both over into the apple-orchard, and thence to a watery end in the marsh below. "You know you'd hate like everything to leave me alone at St Antoine's when you marry Anthony, and Mandell is just the very best person there ever was in the whole world, and we can come to India and visit you, and oh, how glad I am that I was born and came to America."

"I really can't stand any more shocks. If anybody else is going to be married please tell me at once and get it over," I said. "And as you have explained Sue, please now explain yourself, and tell me how this came about, and what Mr Rayne has been contentedly doing with himself in the meantime."

"We arranged it at Duckbrook," said Moira, assuming a straight attitude and a becoming gravity, "but of course I always knew it, and so did he, and so did dear, beautiful Mrs Dare Worthington, only he said it would be a thousand pities if I never knew the delights of being a young, free girl in America. And so it would. Oh, what a good time I did have, and he was always there to see that it went right. So then I explained to him how I had to help Sue, and how I'd promised her and he mustn't spoil it. So of course he waited. I didn't tell Sue, as complications might have disturbed her outlook. Now I've told her, and she's ever so pleased, and Mr Linton has gone to the station to send him a wire to come. I expect he will be here to-night. Isn't it funny to think that he's an American millionaire, and I thought they were all fat, or else too thin, with no digestions. Isn't it nice to be so deeply in love and as well to be going to have so much fun ?"

"I believe it is the very best thing that could have happened, but it is far too startling to take in all at once, and I don't know whether I'm asleep and dreaming, or whether I never was so alive and awake in my life," I answered.

"Come and plunge into the family excitement and realise your privileges," said Moira, and she jumped up and pulled me to my feet, and we made for the house.

At the foot of the piazza steps we encountered Mr Linton, just returned from accomplishing his important errand. He bade me good-morning in his usual grave, earnest way, but there was a look in his eyes that betrayed quite a boyish elation, and a faint, charming suggestion of shyness in his bearing that was most endearing.

I spoke my good wishes at once.

"It adds to everything to have you here," he said; "there is nothing too beautiful to be beautified by sympathy."

"Come right in, you children," called Mrs Wise from the house and, obeying, we found them all in the big, many-windowed room, with all the screens folded away and the sunshine pouring in.

Sue, in the stiffest and cleanest of white piqué, and a big black bow in her hair, was standing putting long-stemmed roses into a green bowl. She was "carrying it off" with great restraint and dignity, but the busy little hands trembled slightly as they worked. Uncle Harry was walking up and down rather quickly in a short, restricted space, his hands in his pockets. Little Montagu looked very interested and amused. Mrs Wise lay back in a rocking-chair, rocking herself gently, radiating with happiness and serenity and love. Aunt Hattie, looking very practical and cheerful, sat up very straight and knitted away at a blue silk sock.

They all acclaimed Moira with enthusiasm when we appeared.

" Why, you blessed, blessed, blessed child," cried Mrs Wise.

" Come right here to your Aunt Hattie and tell her that you love her more than ever," exclaimed Aunt Hattie.

" Huzza, huzza, huzza," yelled little Montagu, and then gave a gurgling howl which he afterwards explained was his " school cry."

" This seems to be everybody's busy day," said Uncle Harry, continuing to pace as if in an invisible cage.

I went over to Sue. So did Mr Linton.

" I want to be in the background," she said firmly. " Moira and Mr Rayne are to be everything. But you can wear a white rose, all day, just for me, if you want to."

Mr Linton selected one, entwined it with fern, and presented it to me, with all the air of one who assists at a solemn ceremony.

" I've got the desire of my heart now," announced Aunt Hattie. " I've secured one of my Scottish nieces to be my own child, in my own country, and I've got the best man in the world to be my nephew. And I haven't much to say against you either, Christopher Linton."

"I'm not a bit surprised at anything," declared Mrs Wise, rocking herself to and fro, her seraphic dark eyes alight as if she gazed at some vision. "I knew you'd come for something beautiful to happen, and something beautiful has happened. And Mandell Rayne is a great soul, and Moira is a great soul, and they're brought together to do something great and beautiful. And Sue and Mr Linton always did like to play together, and now they're going to live and work together. Now, here's Harry has had some words to say about international marriages. I've just told him there's no such thing as an international marriage. If there's love, then that's heaven, and there's only one nation in heaven. And if there isn't love it isn't a marriage, so that's all about international marriages. Moira and Mandell have got love, and that makes them belong to all nations."

"They've got money too, and that makes all nations belong to them," said Uncle Harry.

"Some day you'll grow out of the bonds that make you say things like that, so it don't matter one bit," said Mrs Wise contentedly. "I'm not worried about you one mite. One time I acted like a fool——"

"I shouldn't wonder if that was true," put in her sister-in-law encouragingly.

"And I was real worried about Harry seeing things the way he does, but the immutable laws are always there, and they'll grip him in time, and this beautiful, eventful day should show us that, if it showed us nothing else. Mr Linton and Sue are going to be every bit as happy without so much money. And Moira will keep in touch with the lessons of a limited income by being Sue's friend, and Sue will learn the boundless possibilities wealth reveals by being Moira's friend. Oh, I think it's all beautiful."

"Guess I'll borrow Moira's automobile sometimes all the same," said Sue.

Her father stopped in his walk and contemplated her with mingled pride and amusement.

"Guess you'll always get where you want to get, even if you stroll away from the front door and round the entire globe on your way to the back one," he said.

"Oh, go and sit down, poppa, you make me tired," said Sue.

When I got engaged to Anthony I felt as if I had floated into a haven where nothing sad or dreadful could ever touch me, and never an hour look dreary again. Sue did not look at all as if she felt like that. She had all the appearance of one who gazes out upon sunny seas on which he is about to launch his little ship, and who knows the sunshine may change to cloud and the seas bear him to unknown lands, but who feels a sporting and adventuresome joy at the prospect.

One could not imagine Sue willingly allowing either her engagement or her marriage to be "unprogressive."

"This will be the biggest thing Alexander has run up against since he took over the guardianship of you two children," said Aunt Hattie complacently.

"He'll be very surprised," said Moira confidingly. "He always said no sensible man would marry me. I'd rejoice more in surprising him if I wasn't so surprised myself."

"Don't you worry, we'll surprise him all right," said Aunt Hattie. "I'm coming right over with you, and Mandell will no doubt see his way to making one of the party, and we'll get things put through with American style and promptitude."

"And we'll all be on the quay to welcome your return as an American citizen," said Mrs Wise.

"And while I'm over there I may put through more than one deal," continued Aunt Hattie. "Elspeth Menzies, what is the dream of your life?"

"To live at St Antoine's with Anthony for ever more, and entertain my American friends there," I answered promptly.

"St Antoine's will belong to Elspeth entirely some day," said Moira earnestly, "because, of course, as I'm going to be an American, I'll give up my half."

"Maybe a little American enterprise will put life into Elspeth's dream," said Aunt Hattie, knitting busily.

Sue had now put in her last rose, and she gave the bowl to Mr Linton to place. He glanced round the room, and then put it on a stand beside Mrs Wise, adding most picturesquely to the effective appearance she made in her *négligé* of white silk and lace.

"An offering to the priestess of Hope," he said.

Then Sue announced that she didn't want a crowd all the time, and she was now going to sit on the piazza steps with Elspeth.

"I'll carry out some pillows for you," said Mr Linton thoughtfully, and he piled the steps with scarlet cushions and fetched us a large Japanese parasol to protect us from the sun.

Then he smiled and left us with his usual charming grace. The claims of girl friends are officially recognised, even by "*fiancés*," in America.

"Seems to me life's wonderful," Sue said emphatically, "and everything that happens makes you feel how big and wonderful and endless it is. I feel as if I knew my soul's going to get bigger, and bigger, and bigger, till it's big enough to reach right up to God."

"I should think that's the very best feeling to start out with on any enterprise," I said. "I am so glad you and Mr Linton are engaged, and I can't think why I didn't know all along."

"Why, I'm glad too," said Sue, "because it didn't seem I could ever marry anyone else. You see, when I think it's as if I were talking to him all the time, and wherever I am I want to act up to what he'd think right. But being engaged doesn't alter any reality. If he and Moira had got married I'd have known him just the same, and had all the thoughts knowing him has put into my head."

"I think I'll write the American's catechism," I said. “ It shall begin ‘ What is the chief aim of life ? ’ And the answer will be, ‘ The psychological development of the individual according to such immediate notions of progress as may occur to him.’ ”

“ I guess you think marriage is a bigger thing than I do,” said Sue contentedly. “ It isn’t your soul gets married. Your soul can’t be joined for ever to anything but God. It seems as if Anthony, some way, belonged to you. I couldn’t ever feel anyone belonged to me. I just feel Christopher is going to be with me for a time, and I’m chiefly glad because he helps me to see. If I don’t have someone helping me I can’t always see how beautiful and wonderful God is.”

“ I think you are very brave, if not reckless, Sue, for it would have been rather dark for a while if Mr Linton and Moira had got engaged, and you didn’t exactly go about preventing it.”

“ Why, it’s the biggest mistake to marry someone just because you’re tied up yourself,” said Sue. “ I’ve seen it done, so I know. It’s like putting your little oar in instead of trusting to the immutable laws. I wouldn’t say to myself I wasn’t going to have anything but what I could hold on to in one small life. I had to find out if this was a thing I was meant to have. And when Moira came, and was everything he admires most, all like a picture, with a-low-soft-voice-an-excellent-thing-in-woman, and divine and demure and blue-eyed, I knew if her rosebud beauty left things where they were, it would be a proof it was all right.”

“ I can’t help thinking how awful it would have been if it hadn’t turned out all right. What if Moira had fallen in love with him in the meantime ? ”

“ Why, then, I would have found out what arrangement would bring the most happiness to most people, and fixed it that way,” answered Sue. “ And if I’d got left, some people have to get left, and it just means they’ve set their hearts on the wrong thing. Character’s the only thing that has got any rights. If your character doesn’t bring you a thing you’re not safe with it.”

“ Americans are dreadfully convincing in argument,” I said.

“ I expect Mr Linton did some tall thinking too,” continued Sue. “ What he’d got to do was to find his best mood and perpetuate it. Everyone should do that, and make it a starting-point for all the others. I’m as glad as glad about Moira. Everyone loves Mr Rayne, and he’s thought the world of, and he’s got ever so much money, and it doesn’t hurt any to have all the money you want. And Mrs Dare Worthington is the most elegant woman in the States, and she’ll be just as sweet to Moira as if she had it in her to really love her.”

“ But I guess,” I said, getting American too, “ that I am not wearing my white rose for anything so well defined and thought out as you have communicated to me yet.”

“ That’s so,” said Sue, suddenly changing, and the tears rushing into her sweet, glad, wide-awake eyes. “ You’re wearing it because I’m as happy, as happy, and because it's so much easier to think the right ways about God when you're happy. And you're the blessedest thing anyway, and when you and Anthony are married and live in Scotland, Christopher and I will come right over and visit you every summer."

" I wish next summer was going to see the first of that plan," I said.

" You don't know what will happen," said Sue. " If you put yourself into the current of big forces almost anything can happen."

" You must love Scotland, Sue, and Anthony."

" I love Scotland now, because it sent you here, and I guess Anthony is all right, though I don't believe he begins to be good enough for you. But you're pleased, and momma says everyone's got to live according to the rhythm of their own nature."

" You see, we're not so convinced of that in Scotland," I said.

"Then I'm more glad than ever you came to America," said Sue.

" I am delighted I came to America," I returned. " I'm absorbed in the privilege of being able to think about both countries."

" And thinking is always the main thing," said Sue.

We were not allowed to sit there and talk in idleness all morning. Before very long Aunt Hattie appeared and demanded our immediate assistance in the work of a great festal preparation to which they were all " turning their souls."

Aunt Hattie had enfolded herself in a big linen overall, and having roused us to a sense of duty, she departed to the kitchen, shut the door, and did not emerge for some hours.

Mr Linton had telephoned to Boston for an enormous supply of flowers, which had just arrived, together with a mass of trailing green creepers which he described as " vines," whatever their variety. There were glasses and bowls to be found and polished for their proper holding, and wreaths to be made of the trailing leaves.

Little Montagu, aided by Louis P. Walham, who had ridden over as usual and seemed as excited and delighted as anyone, set out to hang the staircase and windows and walls with little fairy lights. Louis had come, no doubt, to flirt with either Sue or Moira, but finding that was no longer fitting, threw himself heart and soul into congratulations and sympathy. The American youth is an all-round man, and all good dramatic rôles are equally to his taste. I asked Montagu how he came to have so many little lights at hand, and he said they were useful to have around, as things were apt to happen when you were summering, and if there weren't enough Louis Walham would be able to fetch more from his home.

The task involved a good deal of work, but Moira gave her assistance and they got on quickly. Occasionally the florist and the illuminators disagreed about the scheme, but then they always talked it out with the gravity of rival scientists till they came to an understanding.

Then Montagu produced a large basket, which he proceeded to cover with green crinkled paper and decorate with ribbons from Mrs Wise's ribbon-box. This, he explained, was to hold all the letters and telegrams, and, above all, newspaper cuttings, relating to the important event.

"Guess we'll see some good headlines," he said. "You wait. 'Mandell Rayne to wed Scotch Beauty.' 'Miss Moira Menzies of Scotland secures American Millionaire.' 'Cupid's Busy Day at Bar Harbour.' I'll get one ready for Sue too. The Boston papers will have something to say about her."

Uncle Harry, evidently desiring not to be out of it, got a hose and started to wash the windows, and when he had drenched Mr Linton's coat-sleeve and watered a good many of the fairy lights, and in consequence encountered a good deal of plain speaking, he got very angry, and said he supposed he had as much right to his ideas of what was fitting as anybody, and it was his idea to have a guest like Mr Rayne look out at his surroundings through clean glass, and he worked away till most things were wet.

But the house looked very festal and very pretty when evening came, half bridal and half springlike, with its white and green and rose-pink—there a mist of white, here a cluster of rosy stars, and all the little lights like a brave array of captured glow-worms. No autumn tints or effects had been admitted. “ It is autumn outside, but spring in our hearts, and in our hearts is the only reality,” Mr Linton said.

When Mr Rayne’s automobile came puffing to the gate, Moira, with a scarlet cloak over her white dress, went out alone to meet him, and when they came in and I saw them together I was swept into the reality of their happiness, and felt that my vocabulary had no use for the word regret.

Mr Rayne greeted us all and met our congratulations and good wishes as if he had been doing nothing else all his life. He said very little. In a land essentially articulate, Mr Rayne seemed to have achieved a triumph in silence. He told you all you wanted to hear just by being there.

It was the happiest, gayest evening, and yet at the same time everyone seemed to acknowledge that it was also a little bit solemn—something of a ceremonial as well as a party.

Anthony and I had been rather apt to find the occasions when our engagement had been “ played up to ” a little awkward and disconcerting—seldom beautified by public sympathy—but here everyone seemed to know how to do the right thing. No one chaffed. No one ignored. They accepted the realities and celebrated them in the most perfectly dramatic way—which is probably the only natural way.

And we were happy every minute, yet felt when the evening came to an end that we were going forward to things even happier—which is surely the triumph of the art of celebration.

When we parted for the night I felt that Moira and I had come to the end of our adventure in New England together. To-morrow we would start out on a new one.

“ I shall live for ever now in the dream I have always wanted to dream,” were Moira’s good-night words to me.

“ I want you just the same, and should if I were seven times married. I want everything I can get,” said Sue, and Mr Rayne smiled and said, “ Hands across the sea.”

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